JACK [illegible]NCE'S GREAT NEW NOVELET THE NARROW LAND

FIRST PUBLICATION ANYWHERE

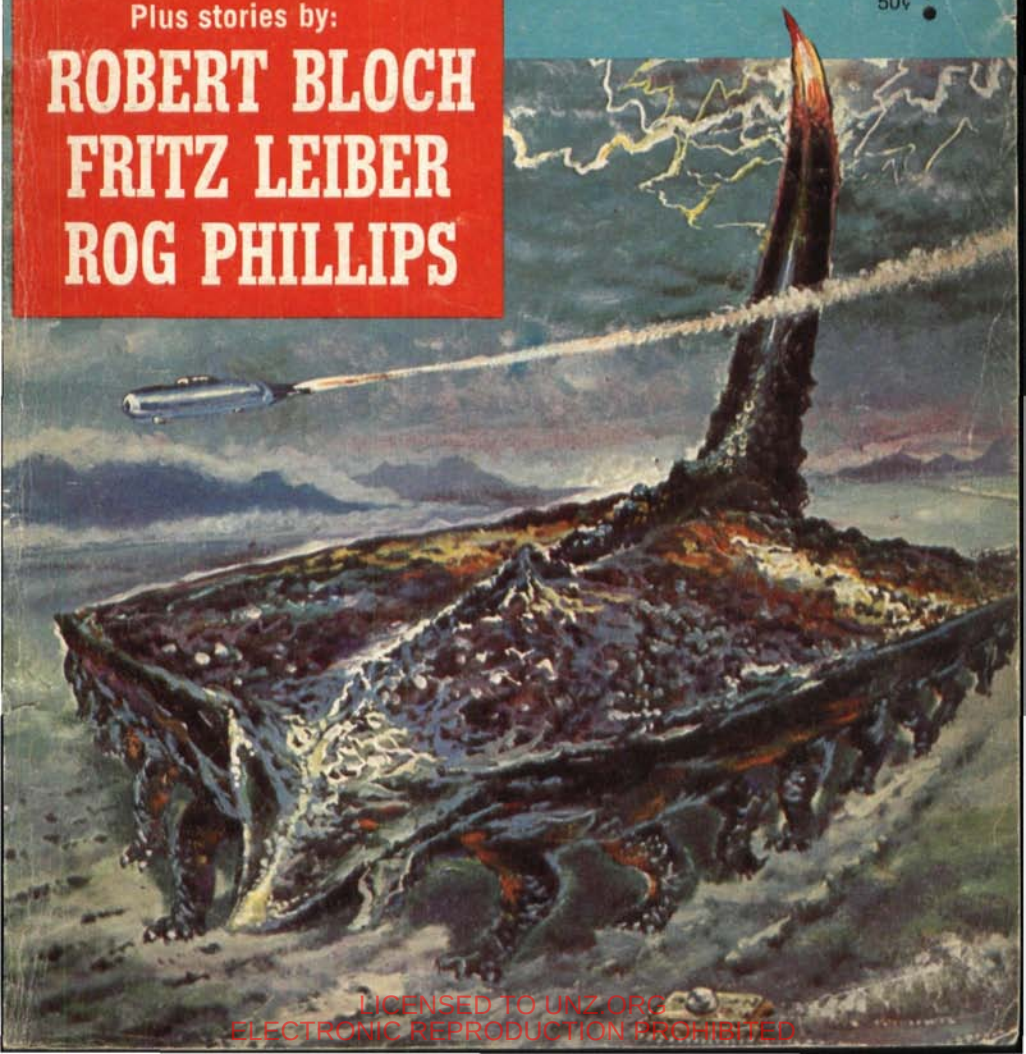
SCIENCE FICTION • FANTASY

FANTASTIC

JULY • 1967
50¢

Plus stories by:

ROBERT BLOCH
FRITZ LEIBER
ROG PHILLIPS



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FANTASTIC IS NOW LARGER THAN EVER WITH AN ADDITIONAL 32 PAGES PER ISSUE! MORE PAGES—MORE STORIES

Subscribe now and read top science-fiction and fantasy stories by such great names as ISAAC ASIMOV, RAY BRADBURY, FRITZ LEIBER, THEODORE STURGEON, CLIFFORD D. SIMAK, KEITH LAUMER, L. SPRAGUE deCAMP, ROBERT BLOCH, ROBERT SHECKLEY, etc.

SCIENCE FICTION•FANTASY

FANTASTIC

Only $2.50 for one year (6 issues)
EXTRA BONUS! Did you miss any of these great stories. FREE if you subscribe now. (One for every 1 year sub.)

763 He That Hath Wings by Edmond Hamilton
564 Adept's Gambit by Fritz Leiber
764 The Kragen by Jack Vance
863 Bazaar of the Bizarre by Fritz Leiber
964 Planet of Change by J. T. McIntosh
963 The House That Time Forgot by Robert F. Young
1164 The Knocking in the Castle by Henry Slesar
1264 The Unteleported Man by Philip K. Dick
165 Repairmen of Cyclops by John Brunner
3/65 The Pillars of Chambaler by John Jakes
264 Novelty Act by Philip K. Dick
464 Centipedes of Space by Daniel F. Galouye
463 Some Fabulous Yonder by Philip Jose Farmer
963 The Demon of the North by C. C. MacApp
364 The Graveyard Heart by Roger Zelazny

CLIP AND MAIL THIS MONEY-SAVING COUPON TODAY.

Enter my subscription for the **New Giant** 162 page FANTASTIC STORIES (Extra 32 pages)
6 Issues only $2.50 ..... 12 Issues only $4.50 .....

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Send the following free issues ..... [List by number]
(Add 50¢ per year additional postage for Canada and Pan American countries; and $1 per year extra for all other foreign orders.)

Mail to: Fantastic / Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364

LICENSED TO LINZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE FICTION•FANTASY

FANTASTIC

July, 1967 Vol. 16, No. 6

JACK VANCE'S GREAT NEW NOVELET

(Nebula Award Winner for 1966) **THE NARROW LAND** 4

NOVELETS

THE SHIP SAILS AT MIDNIGHT, **FRITZ LEIBER** 28

THE REMARKABLE FLIRGLEFLIP, **WILLIAM TENN** 48

SHORT STORIES

FROM THIS DARK MIND, **ROG PHILLIPS** 72

THE MAN WITH THE FINE MIND, **KRIS NEVILLE** 88

MR. STEINWAY, **ROBERT BLOCH** 147

SERIAL

THE ANT WITH THE HUMAN SOUL, **BOB OLSEN** 98

(Conclusion)

SOL COHEN, Editor and Publisher
JOSEPH ROSS, Managing Editor
HERBERT A. LEHRMAN, Associate Editor

HARRY LEE, Art Director
LEONARD GREENE, Advertising Manager
LILLIAN FRIEDENREICH, Subscription Manager

FANTASTIC, Vol. 16, No. 6, July 1967 is published bi-monthly by Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc., Editorial and subscription office: Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y., 11364. Business office: Purchase, N.Y., Box 175, Portchester, N.Y., at 50¢ a copy. Subscription rates: One Year (6 issues) United States and possessions: $2.50; Canada and Pan American Union countries: $3.00; all other countries: $3.50. Second Class Postage paid at Flushing, N.Y., and at additional mailing office. *Copyright 1967 by Ultimate Publishing Co., Inc. All rights reserved.* *Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care: however, publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Steinway, copyright 1954, From This Dark Mind, and The Man With The Fine Mind, copyright 1953, The Ship Sails at Midnight, and The Remarkable Flirgleflip, copyright 1950 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co., Inc. The Ant with the Human Soul, copyright 1932 by Teck Publications, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Those of us lucky enough to be in on his auspicious debut—with "The World Thinker," back almost a quarter century ago—are not at all surprised to see Jack Vance now hailed as one of the top names in the field. A reputation he fully deserves for such brilliant science-fantasies as The Dying Earth, The Dragon Masters, *and now—first in a new series—"The Narrow Land," which is set on the dusk rim of a planet that keeps one side turned always to its sun. A luminary Ern of the shallows may never see as he wakes to life in a watery realm where—for him—death seems to be the norm!*

The Narrow Land

JACK VANCE

NEBULA AWARD WINNER FOR 1966

Illustrated by GRAY MORROW

A pair of nerves joined across the top of Ern's brain; he became conscious, aware of darkness and constriction. The sensation was uncomfrotable. He tensed his members, thrust at the shell, meeting resistance in all directions except one. He kicked, butted and presently created a rupture. The constriction eased somewhat. Ern squirmed around, clawed at the membrane, tore it back and was met by a sudden unpleasant exudation: the juices of a being not himself. It wrenched around, reached forth. Ern recoiled, struck back the probing members, which seemed ominously strong and massive.

There was a period of passivity. Each found the other hateful: they were of the same sort, yet different. Presently the two small creatures fought, with little near-inaudible squeaks and chitters.

Ern eventually strangled his opponent. When he tried to detach himself, he found that an adhesion of tissue had occurred, that the two were now one. Ern expanded himself, surrounded and fused with the defeated individual.

For a further period Ern rested,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exploring his consciousness. The constriction once again became oppressive. Ern thrust and kicked, creating a new rupture, and the shell split wide.

Ern struggled forth into soft slime, then up into a glare of light, an acrid dry void. From above came a harsh cry. An enormous shape hurtled down. Ern dodged, evaded a pair of clicking black prongs. He flapped, paddled, slid down into cool water, where he submerged himself.

Others inhabited the water; Ern saw their dim shapes to all sides. Some were like himself: pale pop-eyed sprats, narrow-skulled with wisps of film for crests. Others were larger, with the legs and arms definitely articulated, the crests stiffer, the skin tough and silver-gray. Ern bestirred himself, tested his arms and legs. He swam, carefully at first, then with competence. Hunger came; he ate: larvae, nodules on the roots of reeds, trifles of this and that.

So Ern entered his childhood, and gradually became wise in the ways of the waterworld. Duration could not be measured; there was no basis for time: no alteration of light and darkness, no change except for Ern's own growth. The only notable events of the sea-shallows were the tragedies. A water-baby frolicking too far, recklessly, offshore might be caught in a current and swept out under the storm-curtain. The armored birds from time to time

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carried away a very young baby basking at the surface. Most dreadful of all was the ogre who lived in one of the sea-sloughs: a brutish creature with long arms, a flat face and four bony ridges over the top of its skull. On one occasion Ern almost became its victim. Skulking under the roots of the swamp-reeds, the ogre lunged forth; Ern felt the swirl of water and darted away, the ogre's grasp so near that the claws scraped his leg. The ogre pursued, making idiotic sounds, then jerking aside seized one of Ern's playfellows, and settled to the bottom to munch upon its captive.

After Ern grew large enough to defy the predator birds, he spent much time on the surface, tasting the air and marveling at the largeness of the vistas, though he understood nothing of what he saw. The sky was a dull gray fog, somewhat brighter out over the sea, never changing except for an occasional wind-whipped cloud or a trail of rain. Close at hand was the swamp: sloughs, low-lying islands overgrown with pallid reeds, complicated black shrubs of the utmost fragility, a few spindly dendrons. Beyond hung a wall of black murk. On the seaward side the horizon was obscured by a lightning-shattered wall of cloud and rain. The wall of murk and the wall of storm ran parallel, delineating the borders of the region between.

The larger of the water-children tended to congregate at the surface. There were two sorts. The typical individual was slender and lithe, with a narrow bony skull, a single crest, protruberant eyes. His temperament was mercurial; he tended to undignified wrangling and sudden brisk fights which were over almost as soon as they started. The sex differences were definite: some were male, half as many were female.

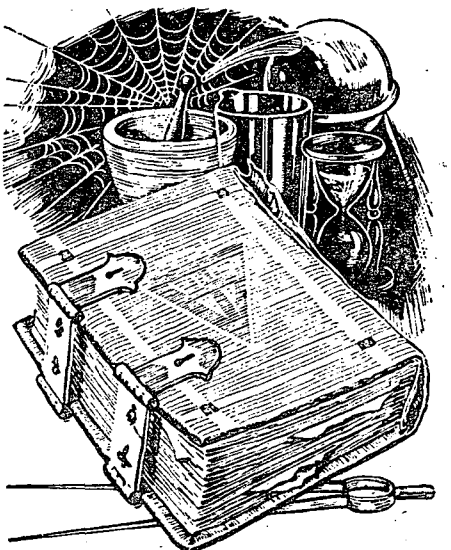
In contrast, and much in the minority, were the twin-crested water-children. These were more massive, with broader skulls, less prominent eyes and a more sedate disposition. Their sexual differentiation was not obvious, and they regarded the antics of the single-crested children with disapproval.

Ern identified himself with this latter group though his crest development was not yet definite, and, if anything, he was even broader and more stocky than the others. Sexually he was slow in developing, but he seemed definitely masculine.

The oldest of the children, single- and double-crested alike, knew a few elements of speech, passed down the classes from a time and source unknown. In due course Ern learned the language, and thereafter idled away long periods discussing the events of the sea-shallows. The wall of storm with its incessant dazzle of lightning was continually fas-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Secrets entrusted to a few



The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE are some things that cannot be generally told—*things you ought to know.* Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind,* and *the mastery of life's problems.* Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. *They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings.* Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe N.D.R.

SEND THIS COUPON

Scribe N.D.R.
The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
San Jose, California 95114

Please send me the *free* book, *The Mastery of Life,* which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip Code_____

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR ZIP CODE

The Rosicrucians (AMORC) SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95114, U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cinating, but the children gave most of their attention to the swamp and rising ground beyond, where, by virtue of tradition transmitted along with the language, they knew their destiny lay, among the 'men'.

Occasionally 'men' would be seen probing the shore mud for flatfish, or moving among the reeds on mysterious errands. At such times the water-children, impelled by some unknown emotion, would instantly submerge themselves, all except the most daring of the single-crested who would float with only their eyes above water, to watch the men at their fascinating activities.

Each appearance of the men stimulated discussion among the water-children. The single-crested maintained that all would become men and walk the dry land, which they declared to be a condition of bliss. The double-crested, more skeptical, agreed that the children might go ashore—after all, this was the tradition—but what next? Tradition offered no information on this score, and the discussions remained speculative.

At long last Ern saw men close at hand. Searching the bottom for crustaceans, he heard a strong rhythmic splashing, and looking up, saw three large long figures: magnificent creatures! They swam with power and grace; even the ogre might avoid such as these! Ern followed at a discreet distance wondering if he dared approach and make himself known. It would be pleasant, he thought, to talk with these men, to learn about life on the shore... The men paused to inspect a school of playing children, pointing here and there, while the children halted their play to stare up in wonder. Now occurred a shocking incident. The largest of the double-crested water-children was Zim the Name-giver, a creature, by Ern's reckoning, old and wise. It was Zim's prerogative to ordain names for his fellows: Ern had received his name from Zim. It now chanced that Zim, unaware of the men, wandered into view. The men pointed, uttered sharp gutteral cries and plunged below the surface. Zim, startled into immobility, hesitated an instant, then darted away. The men pursued, harrying him this way and that, apparently intent on his capture. Zim, wild with fear, swam far offshore, out over the gulf, where the current took him and carried him away, out toward the curtain of storm.

The men, exclaiming in anger, plunged landward in foaming strokes of arms and legs.

In fascinated curiosity Ern followed: up a large slough, finally to a beach of packed mud. The men waded ashore, strode off among the reeds. Ern drifted slowly forward, beset by a quivering conflict of impulses. How, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wondered, could beings so magnificent hound Zim the Namegiver to his doom? The land was close; the footprints of the men were plain on the mud of the beach; where did they lead? What wonderful new vistas lay beyond the line of reeds? Ern eased forward to the beach. He lowered his feet and tried to walk. His legs felt limp and flexible; only by dint of great concentration was he able to set one foot before the other. Deprived of the support of the water his body felt gross and clumsy. From the reeds came a screech of amazement. Ern's legs, suddenly capable, carried him in wobbling leaps down the beach. He plunged into the water, swam frantically back along the slough. Behind him came men, churning the water. Ern ducked aside, hid behind a clump of rotting reeds. The men continued down the slough, out over the shallows where they spent a fruitless period ranging back and forth.

Ern remained in his cover. The men returned, passing no more than the length of their bodies from Ern's hiding place, so close that he could see their glittering eyes and the dark yellow interior of their oral cavities when they gasped for air. With their spare frames, prow-shaped skulls and single crests they resembled neither Ern nor Zim, but rather the single-crested water-children. These were not his sort! He was not a man! Perplexed, seething with excitement and dissatisfaction, Ern returned to the shallows.

But nothing was as before. The innocence of the easy old life had departed; there was now a portent in the air which soured the pleasant old routines. Ern found it hard to wrench his attention away from the shore and he considered the single-crested children, his erstwhile playmates, with new wariness: they suddenly seemed strange, different from himself, and they in turn watched the double-crested children with distrust, swimming away in startled shoals when Ern or one of the others came by.

Ern became morose and dour. The old satisfactions were gone; there were no compensations. Twice again the men swam out across the shallows, but all the double-crested children, Ern among them, hid under reeds. The men thereupon appeared to lose interest, and for a period life went on more or less as before. But change was in the wind. The shoreline became a preoccupation: what lay behind the reed islands, between the reed islands and the wall of murk? Where did the men live, in what wonderful surroundings? With the most extreme vigilance against the ogre Ern swam up the largest of the sloughs. To either side were islands overgrown with pale reeds, with an occasional black skeleton-tree or a globe of tangle-bush:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stuff so fragile as to collapse at a touch. The slough branched, opening into still coves reflecting the gray gloom of the sky, and at last narrowed, dwindling to a channel of black slime.

Ern dared proceed no farther. If someone or something had followed him, he was trapped. And at this moment a strange yellow creature halted overhead to hover on a thousand tinkling scales. Spying Ern it set up a wild ululation. Off in the distance Ern thought to hear a call of harsh voices: men. He swung around and swam back the way he had come, with the tinkle-bird careening above. Ern ducked under the surface, swam down the slough at full speed. Presently he went to the side, cautiously surfaced. The yellow bird swung in erratic circles over the point where he had submerged, its quavering howl now diminished to a mournful hooting sound.

Ern gratefully returned to the shallows. It was now clear to him that if ever he wished to go ashore he must learn to walk. To the perplexity of his fellows, even those of the double-crests, he began to clamber up through the mud of the near island, exercising his legs among the reeds. All went passably well, and Ern presently found himself walking without effort though as yet he dared not try the land behind the islands. Instead he swam along the coast, the storm-wall on his right hand, the shore on his left. On and on he went, further than he had ever ventured before.

The storm-wall was changeless: a roll of rain and a thick vapor lanced with lightning. The wall of murk was the same: dense black at the horizon, lightening by imperceptible gradations to become the normal gray gloom of the sky overhead. The narrow land extended endlessly onward. Ern saw new swamps, reed islands; shelves of muddy foreshore, a spit of sharp rocks. At length the shore curved away, retreated toward the wall of murk, to form a funnel shaped bay, into which poured a freezingly cold river. Ern swam to the shore, crawled up on the shingle, stood swaying on his still uncertain legs. Far across the bay new swamps and islands continued to the verge of vision and beyond. There was no living creature in sight. Ern stood alone on the gravel bar, a small gray figure, swaying on still limber legs, peering earnestly this way and that. The river curved away and out of sight into the darkness. The water of the estuary was bitterly cold, the current ran swift; Ern decided to go no farther. He slipped into the sea and returned the way he had come.

Back in the familiar shallows he took up his old routine: searching the bottom for crustaceans, taunting the ogre, float-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing on the surface with a wary eye for men, testing his legs on the island. During one of the visits ashore he came upon a most unusual sight: a woman depositing eggs in the mud. From behind a curtain of reeds Ern watched in fascination. The woman was not quite so large as the men and lacked the harsh male facial structure, though her cranial ridge was no less prominent. She wore a shawl of a dark red woven stuff: the first garment Ern had ever seen, and he marveled at the urbanity of the men's way of life.

The woman was busy for some time. When she departed, Ern went to examine the eggs. They had been carefully protected from armored birds by a layer of mud and a neat little tent of plaited reeds. The nest contained three clutches, each a row of three eggs, each egg carefully separated from the next by a wad of mud.

So here, thought Ern, was the origin of the water-babies. He recalled the circumstances of his own birth; evidently he had emerged from just such an egg. Rearranging mud and tent, Ern left the eggs as he had found them and returned to the water.

Time passed. The men came no more. Ern wondered that they should abandon an occupation in which they had showed so vigorous an interest; but then the whole matter exceeded the limits of his understanding.

He became prey to restlessness once again. In this regard he seemed unique: none of his fellows had ever wandered beyond the shallows. Ern set off along the shore, this time swimming with the storm-wall to his left. He crossed the slough in which lived the ogre, who glared up as Ern passed and made a threatening gesture. Ern swam hastily on, though now he was of a size larger than that which the ogre preferred to attack.

The shore on this side of the shallows was more interesting and varied than that to the other. He came upon three high islands crowned with a varied vegetation—black skeleton trees; stalks with bundles of pink and white foliage clenched in black fingers; glossy lamellar pillars, the topmost scales billowing out into gray leaves—then the islands were no more, and the mainland rose directly from the sea. Ern swam close to the beach to avoid the currents, and presently came to a spit of shingle pushing out into the sea. He climbed ashore and surveyed the landscape. The ground slanted up under a cover of umbrella trees, then rose sharply to become a rocky bluff crested with black and gray vegetation: the most notable sight of Ern's experience.

Ern slid back into the sea, swam on. The landscape slackened, became flat and swampy. He swam

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

past a bank of black slime overgrown with squirming yellow-green fibrils, which he took care to avoid. Some time later he heard a thrashing hissing sound and looking to sea observed an enormous white worm sliding through the water. Ern floated quietly and the worm slid on past and away. Ern continued. On and on he swam until, as before, the shore was broken by an estuary leading away into the murk. Wading up the beach, Ern looked far and wide across a dismal landscape supporting only tatters of brown lichen. The river which flooded the estuary seemed even larger and swifter than the one he had seen previously, and carried an occasional chunk of ice. A bitter wind blew toward the storm-wall, creating a field of retreating white-caps. The opposite shore, barely visible, showed no relief or contrast. There was no apparent termination to the narrow land; it appeared to reach forever between the walls of storm and gloom.

Ern returned to the shallows, not wholly satisfied with what he had learned. He had seen marvels unknown to his fellows, but what had they taught him? Nothing. His questions remained unanswered.

Changes were taking place; they could not be ignored. The whole of Ern's class lived at the surface, breathing air. Infected by some pale dilution of Ern's curiosity, they stared uneasily landward. Sexual differentiation was evident; there were tendencies toward sexual play, from which the double-crested children, with undeveloped organs, stood contemptuously aloof. Social as well as physical distinctions developed; there began to be an interchange of taunts and derogation, occasionally a brief skirmish. Ern ranged himself with the double-crested children, although on exploring his own scalp, he found only indecisive hummocks and hollows, which to some extent embarrassed him.

In spite of the general sense of imminence, the coming of the men took the children by surprise.

In the number of two hundred the men came down the sloughs and swam out to surround the shallows. Ern and a few others instantly clambered up among the reeds of the island and concealed themselves. The other children milled and swam in excited circles. The men shouted, slapped the water with their arms; diving and veering they herded the water-children up the slough, all the way to the beach of dried mud. Here they chose and sorted, sending the largest up the beach, allowing the fingerlings and sprats to return to the shallows, taking the double-crested children with sharp cries of exultation.

The selection was complete. The captive children were marshaled into groups and sent stag-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gering up the trail; those with legs still soft were carried.

Ern, fascinated by the process, watched from a discreet distance. When men and children had disappeared, he emerged from the water, clambered up the beach to look after his departed friends. What to do now? Return to the shallows? The old life seemed drab and insipid. He dared not present himself to the men. They were single-crested; they were harsh and abrupt. What remained? He looked back and forth, between water and land, and at last gave his youth a melancholy farewell: henceforth he would live ashore.

He walked a few steps up the path, stopped to listen.

Silence.

He proceeded warily, prepared to duck into the undergrowth at a sound. The soil underfoot became less sodden; the reeds disappeared and aromatic black cycads lined the path. Above rose slender supple withes, with gas-filled leaves half-floating, half-supported. Ern moved ever more cautiously, pausing to listen ever more frequently. What if he met the men? Would they kill him? Ern hesitated and even looked back along the path . . . The decision had been made. He continued forward.

A sound, from somewhere not too far ahead. Ern dodged off the path, flattened himself behind a hummock.

No one appeared. Ern moved forward through the cycads, and presently, through the black fronds, he saw the village of the men: a marvel of ingenuity and complication! Nearby stood tall bins containing food-stuffs, then, at a little distance, a row of thatched stalls stacked with poles, coils of rope, pots of pigment and grease. Yellow tinkle-birds, perched on the gables, made a constant chuckling clamor. The bins and stalls faced an open space surrounding a large platform, where a ceremony of obvious import was in progress. On the platform stood four men, draped in bands of woven leaves and four women wearing dark red shawls and tall hats decorated with tinkle-bird scales. Beside the platform, in a miserable gray clot, huddled the single-crested children, the individuals distinguishable only by an occasional gleam of eye or twitch of pointed Crest.

One by one the children were lifted up to the four men, who gave each a careful examination. Most of the male children were dismissed and sent down into the crowd. The rejects, about one in every ten, were killed by the blow of a stone mallet and propped up to face the wall of storm. The girl-children were sent to the other end of the platform, where the four women waited. Each of the trembling girl-children was considered in turn.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

About half were discharged from the platform into the custody of a woman and taken to a booth; about one in every five was daubed along the skull with white paint and sent to a nearby pen where the double-crested children were also confined. The rest suffered a blow of the mallet. The corpses were propped to face the wall of murk . . .

Above Ern's head sounded the mindless howl of a tinkle-bird. Ern darted back into the brush. The bird drifted overhead on clashing scales. Men ran to either side, chased Ern back and forth, and finally captured him. He was dragged to the village, thrust triumphantly up on the platform, amid calls of surprise and excitement. The four priests, or whatever their function, surrounded Ern to make their examination. There was a new set of startled outcries. The priests stood back in perplexity, then after a mumble of discussion signaled to the priest-women. The mallet was brought forward—but was never raised. A man from the crowd jumped up on the platform, to argue with the priests. They made a second careful study of Ern's head, muttering to each other. Then one brought a knife, another clamped Ern's head. The knife was drawn the length of his cranium, first to the left of the central ridge, then to the right, to produce a pair of near-parallel cuts. Orange blood trickled down Ern's face; pain made him tense and stiff. A woman brought forward a handful of some vile substance which she rubbed into the wounds. Then all stood away, murmuring and speculating. Ern glared back, half-mad with fear and pain.

He was led to a booth, thrust within. Bars were dropped across the aperture and laced with thongs.

Ern watched the remainder of the ceremony. The corpses were dismembered, boiled and eaten. The white-daubed girl-children were marshaled into a group with all those double-crested children with whom Ern had previously identified himself. Why, he wondered, had he not been included in this group? Why had he first been threatened with the mallet, then wounded with a knife? The situation was incomprehensible.

The girls and the two-crested children were marched away through the brush. The other girls with no more ado became members of the community. The male children underwent a much more formal instruction. Each man took one of the boys under his sponsorship, and subjected him to a rigorous discipline. There were lessons in deportment, knot-tying, weaponry, language, dancing, the various outcries.

Ern received minimal attention. He was fed irregularly, as occasion seemed to warrant. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

period of his confinement could not be defined, the changeless gray sky providing no chronometric reference; and indeed, the concept of time as a succession of definite interims was foreign to Ern's mind. He escaped apathy only by attending the instruction in adjoining booths, where single-crested boys were taught language and deportment. Ern learned the language long before those under instruction; he and his double-crested fellows had used the rudiments of this language in the long-gone halcyon past.

The twin wounds along Ern's skull eventually healed, leaving parallel weals of scar-tissue. The black feathery combs of maturity were likewise sprouting, covering his entire scalp with down.

None of his erstwhile comrades paid him any heed. They had become indoctrinated in the habits of the village; the old life of the shallows had receded in their memories. Watching them stride past his prison Ern found them increasingly apart from himself. They were lithe, slender, agile, like tall keen-featured lizards. He was heavier, with blunter features, a broader head; his skin was tougher and thicker, a darker gray. He was now almost as large as the men, though by no means so sinewy and quick: when need arose, they moved with mercurial rapidity.

Once or twice Ern, in a fury, attempted to break the bars of his booth, only to be proded with a pole for his trouble, and he therefore desisted from this unprofitable exercise. He became fretful and bored. The booths to either side were now used only for copulation, an activity which Ern observed with dispassionate interest.

The booth at last was opened. Ern rushed forth, hoping to surprise his captors and win free, but one man seized him, another looped a rope around his body. Without ceremony he was led from the village.

The men offered no hint of their intentions. Jogging along at a half-trot, they took Ern through the black brush in that direction known as 'sea-left': which was to say, with the sea on the left hand. The trail veered inland, rising over bare hummocks, dropping into dank swales, brimming with rank black dendrons.

Ahead loomed a great copse of umbrella trees, impressively tall, each stalk as thick as the body of a man, each billowing leaf large enough to envelope a half-dozen booths like that in which Ern had been imprisoned.

Someone had been at work. A number of the trees had been cut, the poles trimmed and neatly stacked, the leaves cut into rectangular sheets and draped over ropes. The racks supporting the poles had been built with meticulous accuracy, and Ern wondered who had done such pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cise work: certainly not the men of the village, whose construction even Ern found haphazard.

A path led away through the forest: a path straight as a string, of constant width, delineated by parallel lines of white stones: a technical achievement far beyond the capacity of the men, thought Ern.

The men now became furtive and uneasy. Ern tried to hang back, certain that whatever the men had in mind was not to his advantage, but willy-nilly he was jerked forward.

The path made an abrupt turn, marched up a swale between copses of black-brown cycads, turned out upon a field of soft white moss, at the center of which stood a large and splendid village. The men, pausing in the shadows, made contemptuous sounds, performed insulting acts—provoked, so Ern suspected, by envy, for the village across the meadow surpassed that of his captors as much as that village excelled the environment of the shallows. There were eight precisely spaced rows of huts, built of sawed planks, decorated or given symbolic import by elaborate designs of blue, maroon and black. At the sea-right and sea-left ends of the central avenue stood larger constructions with high-peaked roofs, shingled, like all the others, with slabs of biotite. Notably absent were disorder and refuse; this village, unlike the village of the single-crested men, was fastidiously neat. Behind the village rose the great bluff Ern had noticed on his exploration of the coast.

At the edge of the meadow stood a row of six stakes, and to the first of these the men tied Ern.

"This is the village of the 'Twos'," declared one of the men. "Folk such as yourself: Do not mention that we cut your scalp or affairs will go badly."

They moved back, taking cover under a bank of worm plants. Ern strained at his bonds, convinced that no matter what the eventuality, it could not be to his benefit.

The villagers had taken note of Ern. Ten persons set forth across the meadow. In front came four splendid 'Twos', stepping carefully, with an exaggerated strutting gait, followed by six young One-girls, astoundingly urbane in gowns of wadded umbrella leaf. The girls had been disciplined; they no longer used their ordinary sinuous motion but walked in a studied simlation of the Two attitudes. Ern stared in fascination. The 'Twos' appeared to be of his own sort, sturdier and heavier than the cleaver-headed 'Ones.'

The pair in the van apparently shared equal authority. They comported themselves with canonical dignity, and their garments—fringed shawls of black,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brown and purple, boots of gray membrane with metal clips, metal filigree greaves—were formalized and elaborate. He on the stormward side wore a crest of glittering metal barbs; he on the darkward side a double row of tall black plumes. The Twos at their back seemed of somewhat lesser prestige. They wore caps of complicated folds and tucks and carried halberds three times their own length. At the rear walked the One-girls, carrying parcels. Ern saw them to be members of his own class, part of the group which had been led away after the selection ritual. Their skin had been stained dark red and yellow; they wore dull yellow caps, yellow shalws, yellow sandals, and walked with the mincing delicate rigidity in which they had been schooled.

The foremost Twos, halting at either side of Ern, examined him with portentous gravity. The halberdiers fixed him with a minatory stare. The girls posed in self-conscious attitudes. The Twos squinted in puzzlement at the double ridges of scar tissue along his scalp. They arrived at a dubious consensus: "He appears sound, if somewhat gross of body and oddly ridged."

One of the halberdiers, propping his weapon against a stake, unbound Ern, who stood tentatively half of a mind to take to his heels. The Two wearing the crest of metal barbs inquired, "Do you speak?"

"Yes."

"You must say 'Yes, Preceptor of the Storm Dazzle'; such is the form."

Ern found the admonition puzzling, but no more so than the other attributes of the Twos. His best interests, so he decided, lay in cautious cooperation. The Twos, while arbitrary and capricious, apparently did not intend him harm. The girls arranged the parcels beside the stake: payment, so it seemed, to the One-men.

"Come then," commanded he of the black plumes. "Watch your feet, walk correctly! Do not swing your arms; you are a Two, an important individual; you must act appropriately, according to the Way."

"Yes, Preceptor of the Storm Dazzle."

"You will address me as 'Preceptor of the Dark Chill'!"

Confused and apprehensive, Ern was marched across the meadow of pale moss. The trail, demarcated now by lines of black stones, bestrewn with black gravel, and glistening in the damp, exactly bisected the meadow, which was lined to either side by tall black-brown fan-trees. First walked the preceptors, then Ern, then the halberdiers and finally the six One-girls.

The trail connected with the central avenue of the village, which opened at the center into a square plaza paved with squares

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of wood. To the darkward side of the plaza stood a tall black tower supporting a set of peculiar black objects; on the stormward side an identical white tower presented lightning symbols. Across and set back in a widening of the avenue was a long two-story hall, to which Ern was conducted and lodged in a cubicle.

A third pair of Twos, of rank higher than the halberdiers but lower than the Preceptors—the 'Pedagogue of the Storm Dazzle' and the 'Pedagogue of the Dark Chill'—took Ern in charge. He was washed, anointed with oil, and again the weals along his scalp received a puzzled inspection. Ern began to suspect that the Ones had used duplicity; that, in order to sell him to the Twos, they had simulated double ridges across his scalp; and that, after all, he was merely a peculiar variety of One. It was indeed a fact that his sexual parts resembled those of the One-men rather than the epicene, or perhaps atrophied, organs of the Twos. The suspicion made him more uneasy than ever, and he was relieved when the pedagogues brought him a cap, half of silver scales, half of glossy black bird-fiber, which covered his scalp, and a shawl hanging across his chest and belted at the waist, which concealed his sex organs.

As with every other aspect and activity of the Two-village there were niceties of usage in regard to the cap. "The Way requires that in low-ceremonial activity, you must stand with black toward Night and silver toward Chaos. If a ritual or other urgency impedes, reverse your cap."

This was the simplest and least complicated of the decorums to be observed.

The Pedagogues found must to criticize in Ern's deportment.

"You are somewhat more crude and gross than the usual cadet," remarked the Pedagogue of Storm Dazzle. "The injury to your head has affected your condition."

"You will be carefully schooled," the Pedagogue of Dark Chill told him. "As of this moment, consider yourself a mental void."

A dozen other young Twos, including four from Ern's class, were undergoing tutelage. As instruction was on an individual basis, Ern saw little of them. He studied diligently and assimilated knowledge with a facility which won him grudging compliments. When he seemed proficient in primary methods, he was introduced to cosmology and religion. "We inhabit the Narrow Land," declared the Pedagogue of Storm Dazzle. "It extends forever! How can we assert this with such confidence? Because we know that the opposing principles of Storm and Dark Chill, being divine, are infinite. Therefore, the Narrow Land, the region of confrontation, likewise is infinite."

Ern ventured a question. "What

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exists behind the wall of storm?"

"There is no 'behind.' STORM-CHAOS *is,* and dazzles the dark with his lightnings. This is the masculine principle. DARK-CHILL, the female principle, *is.* She accepts the rage and fire and quells it. We Twos partake of each, we are at equilibrium, and hence excellent."

Ern broached a perplexing topic: "The Two-women do not produce eggs?"

"There are neither Two-women nor Two-men! We are brought into being by dual-divine intervention, when a pair of eggs in a One-woman's clutch are put down in juxtaposition. Through alternation, these are always male and female and so yield a double individual, neutral and dispassionate, symbolized by the paired cranial ridges. One-men and One-women are incomplete, forever driven by the urge to couple; only fusion yields the true Two."

It was evident to Ern that questioning disturbed the Pedagogues, so he desisted from further interrogation, not wishing to call attention to his unusual attributes. During instruction he had sensibly increased in size. The combs of maturity were growing up over his scalp; his sexual organs had developed noticeably. Both, luckily, were concealed, by cap and shawl. In some fashion he was different from other Twos, and the Pedagogues, should they discover this fact, would feel dis-

LICENSED TO UMS DRC
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may and confusion, at the very least.

Other matters troubled Ern: namely the impulses aroused within himself by the slave One-girls. Such tendencies were defined to be ignoble! This was no way for a Two to act! The Pedagogues would be horrified to learn of his leanings. But if he were not a Two—what was he?

Ern tried to quell his hot blood by extreme diligence. He began to study the Two technology, which like every other aspect of Two society was rationalized in terms of formal dogma. He learned the methods of collecting bog iron, of smelting, casting, forging, hardening and tempering. Occasionally he wondered how the skills had first been evolved, inasmuch as empiricism, as a mode of thought, was antithical to the Dual Way.

Ern thoughtlessly touched upon the subject during a recitation. Both Pedagogues were present. The Pedagogue of Storm-Dazzle replied, somewhat tartly, that all knowledge was a dispensation of the two Basic Principles.

"In any event," stated the Pedagogue of Dark-Chill, "the matter is irrelevant. What is, *is*, and *by this token* is optimum."

"Indeed," remarked the Pedagogue of Storm-Dazzle, "the very fact that you have formed this inquiry betrays a disorganized mind, more typical of a 'Freak' than a Two."

"What is a 'Freak'?" asked Ern.

The Pedagogue of Dark-Chill made a stern gesture. "Once again your mentality tends to random association and discontent with authority!"

"Respectfully, Pedagogue of Dark-Chill, I wish only to learn the nature of 'wrong', so that I may know its distinction from 'right'."

"It suffices that you imbue yourself with 'right', with no reference whatever to 'wrong'!"

With this viewpoint Ern was forced to be content. The Pedagogues, leaving the chamber, glanced back at him. Ern heard a fragment of their muttered conversation. "—surprising perversity—" "—but for the evidence of the cranial ridges—"

In perturbation Ern walked back and forth across his cubicle. He was different from the other cadets: so much was clear.

At the refectory, where the cadents were brought nutriment by One-girls, Ern covertly scrutinized his fellows. While only little less massive than himself, they seemed differently proportioned, almost cylindrical, with features and protrusions less prominent. If he were different, what kind of person was he? A 'Freak'? What was a 'Freak'? A masculine Two? Ern was inclined to credit this theory, for it explained his interest in the One-girls, and he turned to watch them gliding back and forth with trays.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in spite of their One-ness, they were undeniably appealing . . .

Thoughtfully Ern returned to his cubicle. In due course a One-girl came past. Ern summoned her into the cubicle and made his wishes known. She showed surprise and uneasiness, though no great disinclination. "You are supposed to be neutral; what will everyone think?"

"Nothing whatever, if they are unaware of the situation."

"True. But is the matter feasible? I am One and you are a Two—"

"The matter may or may not be feasible; how will the truth be known unless it is attempted, orthodoxy notwithstanding?"

"Well, then, as you will . . ."

A monitor looked into the cubicle, to stare dumbfounded. "What goes on here?" He looked more closely, then tumbled backward into the compound to shout: "A Freak, a Freak! Here among us, a Freak! To arms, kill the Freak!"

Ern thrust the girl outside. "Mingle with the others, deny everything. I now feel that I must leave." He ran out upon the central avenue, looked up and down. The halberdiers, informed of emergency, were arraying themselves in formally appropriate gear. Ern took advantage of the delay to run from the village. In pursuit came the Twos, calling threats and ritual abuse. The sea-right path toward the pole forest and the swamp was closed to him; Ern fled sea-left, toward the great bluff. Dodging among fan trees and banks of wormweed, finally hiding under a bank of fungus, he gained a respite while the halberdiers raced past.

Emerging from his covert, Ern stood uncertainly, wondering which way to go. Freak or not, the Twos had exhibited what seemed an irrational antagonism. Why had they attacked him? He had performed no damage, perpetrated no wilful deception. The fault lay with the Ones. In order to deceive the Twos they had scarred Ern's head—a situation for which Ern could hardly be held accountable. Bewildered and depressed, Ern started toward the shore; where at least he could find food. Crossing a peat-bog he was sighted by the halberdiers, who instantly set up the outcry: "Freak! Freak! Freak!" And again Ern was forced to run for his life, up through a forest of mingled cycads and pole-trees, toward the great bluff which now loomed ahead.

A massive stone wall barred his way: a construction obviously of great age, overgrown with black and brown lichen. Ern ran staggering and wobbling along the wall, with the halberdiers close upon him, still screaming: 'Freak! Freak! Freak!"

A gap appeared in the wall. Ern jumped through to the opposite side, ducked behind a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clump of feather-bush. The halberdiers stopped short in front of the gap, their cries stilled, and now they seemed to be engaged in controversy.

Ern waited despondently for discovery and death, since the bush offered scant concealment. One of the halberdiers at last ventured gingerly through the wall, only to give a startled grunt and jump back.

There were receding footsteps, then silence. Ern crawled cautiously from his hiding place, and went to peer through the gap. The Twos had departed. Peculiar, thought Ern. They must have known he was close at hand . . . He turned. Ten paces distant the largest man he had yet seen leaned on a sword, inspecting him with a brooding gaze. The man was almost twice the size of the largest Two. He wore a dull brown smock of soft leather, a pair of shining metal wristbands. His skin was a heavy rugose gray, tough as horn; at the joints of his arms and legs were bony juts, ridges and buttresses, which gave him the semblance of enormous power. His skull was broad, heavy harshly indented and ridged; his eyes were blazing crystals in deep shrouded sockets. Along his scalp ran three serrated ridges. In addition to his sword, he carried, slung over his shoulder, a peculiar metal device, with a long nozzle. He advanced a slow step. Ern swayed back, but for some reason beyond his own knowing was dissuaded from taking to his heels.

The man spoke, in a hoarse voice: "Why do they hunt you?"

Ern took courage from the fact that the man had not killed him out of hand. "They called me 'Freak' and drove me forth."

"'Freak'?" The Three considered Ern's scalp. "You are a Two."

"The One's cut my head to make scars, then sold me to the Twos." Ern felt the weals. On either side and at the center, almost as prominent as the scars, were the crests of an adult, three in number. They were growing apace; even had he not compromised himself, the Twos must have found him out on the first occasion he removed his cap. He said humbly: "It appears that I am a 'Freak' like yourself."

The Three made a brusque sound. "Come with me."

The walked back through the grove, to a path which slanted up the bluff, then swung to the side and entered a valley. Beside a pond rose a great stone hall flanked by two towers with steep conical roofs—in spite of age and dilapidation a structure to stagger Ern's imagination.

By a timber portal they entered a courtyard which seemed to Ern a place of unparalleled charm. At the far end boulders and a great overhanging slab created the effect of a grotto. Within were trick-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ling water, growths of feathery black moss, pale cycads, a settle padded with woven reed and sphagnum. The open area was a swamp-garden, exhaling the odors of reed, water-soaked vegetation, resinous wood. Remarkable, thought Ern, as well as enchanting: neither the Ones nor the Twos contrived except for an immediate purpose.

The Three took Ern across the court into a stone chamber, also half-open to the refreshing drizzle, carpeted with packed sphagnum. Under the shelter of the ceiling were the appurtenances of the Three's existence: crocks and bins, a table, a cabinet, tools and implements.

The Three pointed to a bench. "Sit."

Ern gingerly obeyed.

"You are hungry?"

"No."

"How was your imposture discovered?"

Ern related the circumstances which led to his exposure. The Three showed no disapproval, which gave Ern encouragement. "I had long suspected that I was something other than a 'Two'."

"You are obviously a 'Three'," said his host. "Unlike the neuter Twos, Threes are notably masculine, which explains your inclinations for the One-woman. Unluckily there are no Three females." He looked at Ern. "They did not tell how you were born?"

"I am the fusion of One-eggs."

"True. The One-woman lays eggs of alternate sex, in clutches of three. The pattern is male-female-male; such is the nature of her organism. A sheath forms on the interior of her ovipositor; as the eggs emerge, a sphincter closes, to encapsulate the eggs. If she is careless, she will fail to separate the eggs and will put down a clutch with two eggs in contact. The male breaks into the female shell; there is fusion; a Two is hatched. At the rarest of intervals three eggs are so joined. One male fuses with the female, then, so augmented, he breaks into the final egg and assimilates the other male. The result is a male Three."

Ern recalled his first memory. "I was alone. I broke into the male-female shell. We fought at length."

The Three reflected for a lengthy period. Ern wondered if he had committed an annoyance. Finally the Three said, "I am named Mazar the Final. Now that you are here I can be known as 'the Final' no longer. I am accustomed to solitude; I have become old and severe; you may find me poor company. If such is the case, you are free to pursue existence elsewhere. If you choose to stay, I will teach you what I know, which is perhaps pointless activity, since the Twos will presently come in a great army to kill us both."

"I will stay," said Ern. "As of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now I know only the ceremonies of the Twos, which I may never put to use. Are there no other Threes?"

"The Twos have killed all—all but Mazar the Final."

"And Ern."

"And now Ern."

"What of sea-left and sea-right, beyond the rivers, along other shores? Are there no more men?"

"Who knows? The Wall of Storm confronts the Wall of Dark; the Narrow Land extends—how far? Who knows? If to infinity then all possibilities must be realized; then there are other Ones, Twos and Threes. If the Narrow Land terminates at Chaos, then we may be alone."

"I have traveled sea-right and sea-left until wide rivers stopped me," said Ern. "The Narrow Land continued without any sign of coming to an end. I believe that it must extend to infinity; in fact, it is hard to conceive of a different situation."

"Perhaps, perhaps, said Mazar gruffly. "Come." He conducted Ern about the hall, through workshops and repositories, chambers crowded with mementoes, trophies and nameless paraphernalia.

"Who used these marvelous objects? Were there many Threes?"

"At one time there were many," intoned Mazar, in a voice as hoarse and dreary as the sound of wind. "It was so long ago that I cannot put words to the thought. I am the last."

"Why were there so many then and so few now?"

"It is a melancholy tale. A One-tribe lived along the shore, with customs different from the Ones of the swamp. They were a gentle people, and they were ruled by a Three who had been born by accident. He was Mena the Origin, and he caused the women to produce clutches with the eggs purposely joined, so that a large number of Threes came into being. It was a great era. We were dissatisfied with the harsh life of the Ones, the rigid life of the Twos; we created a new existence. We learned the use of iron and steel, we built this hall and many more; the Ones and Twos both learned from us and profited."

"Why did they war upon you?"

"By our freedom we incurred their fear. We set out to explore the Narrow Land. We traveled many leagues sea-left and sea-right. An expedition penetrated the Dark-Chill to a wilderness of ice, so dark that the explorers walked with torches. We built a raft and sent it to drift under the Wall of Storm. There were three Ones aboard. The raft was tethered with a long cable; when we pulled it back the Ones had been riven by dazzle and were dead. By these acts we infuriated the Two preceptors. They declared us impious and mar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shaled the Ones of the swamp. They massacred the Ones of the shore, then they made war on the Threes. Ambush, poison, pitfall: they showed no mercy. We killed Twos; there were always more Twos, but never more Threes.

"I could tell long tales of the war, how each of my comrades met death. Of them all, I am the last. I never go beyond the wall and the Twos are not anxious to attack me, for they fear my fire gun. But enough for now. Go where you will, except beyond the wall, where the Twos are dangerous. There is food in the bins; you may rest in the moss. Reflect upon what you see; and when you have questions, I will answer."

Mazar went his way. Ern refreshed himself in the falling water of the grotto, ate from the bins, then walked upon the gray meadow to consider what he had learned. Here Mazar, becoming curious, discovered him. "Well then," asked Mazar, "and what do you think now?"

"I understand many things which have puzzled me," said Ern. "Also I regret leaving the One-girl, who showed a cooperative disposition."

"This varies according to the individual," said Mazar. "In the olden times we employed many such as domestics, though their mental capacity is not great."

"If there were Three-women, would they not produce eggs and eventually Three-children?"

Mazar made a brusque gesture. "There are no Three-women; there have never been Three-women. The process allows none to form."

"What if the process were controlled?"

"Bah. The ovulation of One-women is not susceptible to our control."

"Long ago," said Ern, "I watched a One-woman preparing her nest. She laid in clutches of three. If sufficient eggs were collected, rearranged and joined, in some cases the female principle would dominate."

"This is an unorthodox proposal," said Mazar, "and to my knowledge has never been tried. It cannot be feasible . . . Such women might not be fertile. Or they might be freaks indeed."

"We are a product of the process," Ern argued. "Because there are two male eggs to the clutch, we are masculine. If there were two female and one male, or three female, why should not the result be female? As for fertility, we have no knowledge until the matter is put to test."

"The process is unthinkable!" roared Mazar, drawing himself erect, crests extended. "I will hear no more!"

Dazed by the fury of the old Three's response, Ern stood limp. Slowly he turned and started to walk sea-right, toward the wall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where are you going?" Mazar called after him.

"To the swamps."

"And what will you do there?"

"I will find eggs and try to help a Three-woman into being."

Mazar glared and Ern prepared to flee for his life. Then Mazar said, "If your scheme is sound, all my comrades are dead in vain. Existence becomes a mockery."

"Perhaps nothing will come of the notion," said Ern. "If so, nothing is different."

"The venture is dangerous," grumbled Mazar. "The Twos will be alert."

"I will go down to the shore and swim to the swamp; they will never notice me. In any case, I have no better use to which to put my life."

"Go then," said Mazar in his hoarsest voice. "I am old and without enterprise. Perhaps our race may yet be regenerated. Go then, take care and return safely. You and I are the only Threes alive."

Mazar patrolled the wall. At times he ventured out into the pole-forest, listening, peering down toward the Two village. Ern had been gone a long time, or so it seemed. At last: far-off alarms, the cry of "Freak! Freak! Freak!"

Recklessly, three crests furiously erect, Mazar plunged toward the sound. Ern appeared through the trees, haggard, streaked with mud, carrying a rush-basket. In frantic pursuit came Two halberdiers and somewhat to the side a band of painted One-men. "This way!" roared Mazar. "To the wall!" He brought forth his fire-gun. The halberdiers, in a frenzy, ignored the threat. Ern tottered past him; Mazar pointed the projector, pulled the trigger: flame enveloped four of the halberdiers who ran thrashing and flailing through the forest. The others halted. Mazar and Ern retreated to the wall, passed through the gap. The halberdiers, excited to rashness, leapt after them. Mazar swung his sword; one of the Twos lost his head. The others retreated in panic, keening in horror at so much death.

Ern slumped upon the ground, cradling the eggs upon his body.

"How many?" demanded Mazar.

"I found two nests. I took three clutches from each."

"Each nest is separate and each clutch as well? Eggs from different nests may not fuse."

"Each is separate."

Mazar carried the corpse to the gap in the wall, flung it forth, then threw the head at the skulking One-men. None came to challenge him.

Once more in the hall Mazar arranged the eggs on a stone settle. He made a sound of satisfaction. "In each clutch are two round eggs and one oval: male and female; and we need not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guess at the combinations." He reflected a moment. "Two males and a female produce the masculine Three; two females and a male should exert an equal influence in the opposite direction... There will necessarily be an excess of male eggs. They will yield two masculine Threes; possibly more, if three male eggs are able to fuse." He made a thoughtful sound. "It is a temptation to attempt the fusion of four eggs."

"In this case I would urge caution," suggested Ern.

Mazar drew back in surprise and displeasure. "Is your wisdom so much more profound than mine?"

Ern made a polite gesture of self-effacement, one of the graces learned at the Two school. "I was born on the shallows, among the water-babies. Our great enemy was the ogre who lived in a slough. While I searched for eggs, I saw him again. He is larger than you and I together; his limbs are gross; his head is malformed and hung over with red wattles. Upon his head stand four crests."

Mazar was silent. He said at last: "We are Threes. Best that we produce other Threes. Well then, to work."

The eggs lay in the cool mud, three paces from the water of the pond.

"Now to wait," said Mazar. "To wait and wonder."

"I will help them survive," said Ern. "I will bring them food and keep them safe. And—if they are female . . ."

"There will be two females," declared Mazar. "Of this I am certain. I am old—but, well, we shall see."

The End

Use this coupon to order back issues of Fantastic

We have a limited supply of back issues that can be ordered on a first-come, first-served basis. Just fill in the coupon below, enclose your remittance in the amount of 40¢ for each issue and mail.

AMAZING/Box 7, Oakland Gardens
Flushing, N.Y. 11364

SCIENCE FICTION FANTASY FANTASTIC

Please send the following back issues of
I am enclosing _____ to cover cost of the magazine, shipping and handling.

Month _____ Year _____
Month _____ Year _____
Month _____ Year _____

Address _____

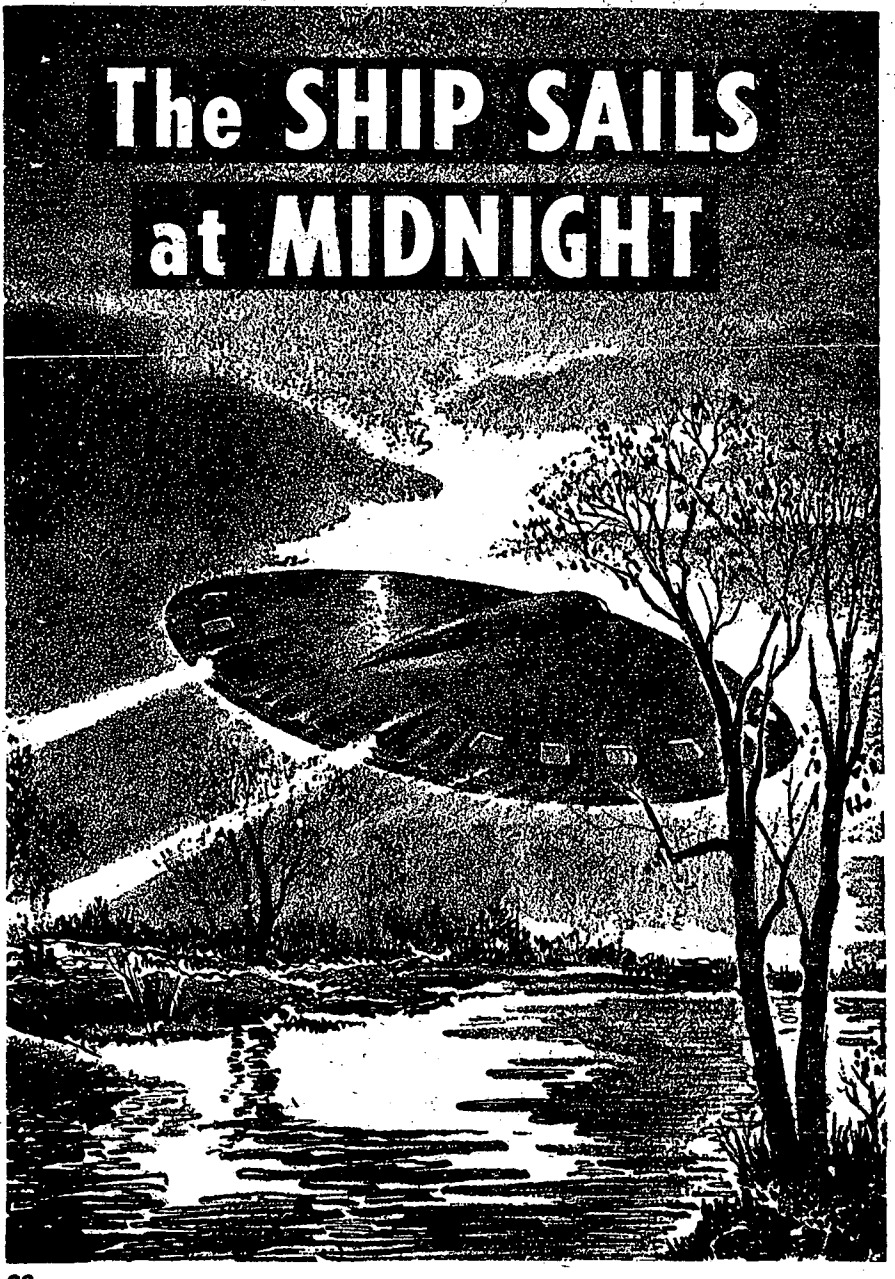
Name _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

No charge or C.O.D. orders please.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The SHIP SAILS at MIDNIGHT



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By Fritz Leiber

Though other—usually lesser—writers may view the stars with something like dread, seeing them as populated by hosts of hideous globs or tentacled horrors waiting to screech down on a defenseless Earth, that's never been the way of Fritz Leiber. Author of such classics as the Hugo-winning Wanderer, *he tends to view life more compassionately—terrestrial or otherwise. So when he thinks of a visitor from the stars, often as not it will come out—as it does here—something like Helen, a "waitress" in an all-night eaterie—tall, exotically beautiful, and capable of more love than any four of the sorry mortals caught in her spell.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THIS IS the story of a beautiful woman.

And of a monster.

It is also the story of four silly, selfish, culture-bound inhabitants of the planet Earth. Es, who was something of an artist. Gene, who studied atoms—and fought the world, and himself. Louis, who philosophized. And Larry—that's my name—who tried to write books.

It was an eerie, stifling August when we met Helen. The date is fixed in my mind because our little city had just had its mid-western sluggishness ruffled by a series of those scares that either give rise to oddity items in the newspapers, or else are caused by them—it's sometimes hard to tell which. People had seen flying discs and heard noises in the sky—someone from the college geology department tried unsuccessfully to track down a meteorite. A farmer this side of the old coal pits got all excited about something "big and shapeless" that disturbed his poultry and frightened his wife, and for a couple of days men tracked around fruitlessly with shotguns—just another of those "rural monster" scares.

Even the townfolk hadn't been left out. For their imaginative enrichment they had a "Hypnotism Burglar," an apparently mild enough chap who blinked soft lights in people's faces and droned some siren-song outside their houses at night. For a week high-school girls squealed twice as loud after dark, men squared their shoulders adventurously at strangers, and women peered uneasily out of their bedroom windows after turning out the lights.

Louis and Es and I had picked up Gene at the college library and wanted a bite to eat before we turned in. Although by now they had almost petered out, we were talking about our local scares—a chilly hint of the supernatural makes good conversational fare in a month too hot for any real thinking. We slouched into the one decent open-all-night restaurant our dismal burg possesses (it wouldn't have that if it weren't for the "wild" college folk) and found that Benny had a new waitress.

She was really very beautiful, much too exotically beautiful for Benny's. Masses of pale gold ringlets piled high on her head. An aristocratic bony structure (from Es's greedy look I could tell she was instantly thinking sculpture). And a pair of the dreamiest, calmest eyes in the world.

She came over to our table and silently waited for our orders. Probably because her beauty flustered us, we put on an elaborate version of our act of "intellectuals precisely and patiently explaining their desires to a pig-headed member of the proletariat." She listened, nodded, and

Copyright 1950 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co., Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

presently returned with our orders.

Louis had asked for just a cup of black coffee.

She brought him a half cantaloupe also.

He sat looking at it for a moment. Then he chuckled incredulously. "You know, I actually wanted that," he said. "But I didn't know I wanted it. You must have read my subconscious mind."

"What's that?" she asked in a low, lovely voice with intonations rather like Benny's.

Digging into his cantaloupe, Louis sketched an explanation suiable for fifth-graders.

She disregarded the explanation. "What do you use it for?" she asked.

Louis, who is something of a wit, said, "I don't use it. It uses me."

"That the way it should be?" she commented.

None of us knew the answer to that one, so since I was the Gang's specialist in dealing with the lower orders, I remarked brilliantly, "What's your name?"

"Helen," she told me.

"How long have you been here?"

"Couple days," she said, starting back toward the counter.

"Where did you come from?"

She spread her hands. "Oh—places."

Whereupon Gene, whose humor inclines toward the fantastic, asked, "Did you arrive on a flying disc?"

She glanced back at him and said, "Wise guy."

But all the same she hung around our table, filling sugar basins and what not. We made our conversation especially erudite, each of us merrily spinning his favorite web of half-understood intellectual jargon and half-baked private opinion. We were conscious of her presence, all right.

Just as we were leaving, the thing happened. At the doorway something made us all look back. Helen was behind the counter. She was looking at us. Her eyes weren't dreamy at all, but focussed, intent, radiant. She was smiling.

My elbow was touching Es's naked arm—we were rather crowded in the doorway—and I felt her shiver. Then she gave a tiny jerk and I sensed that Gene, who was holding her other arm (they were more or less sweethearts), had tightened his grip on it.

For perhaps three seconds it stayed just like that, the four of us looking at the one of her. Then Helen shyly dropped her gaze and began to mop the counter with a rag.

We were all very quiet going home.

Next night we went back to Benny's again, rather earlier. Helen was still there, and quite as beautiful as we remembered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her. We exchanged with her a few more of those brief, teasing remarks—her voice no longer sounded so much like Benny's—and staged some more intellectual pyrotechnics for her benefit. Just before we left, Es went up to her at the counter and talked to her privately for perhaps a minute, at the end of which Helen nodded.

"Ask her to pose for you?" I asked Es when we got outside.

She nodded. "That girl has the most magnificent figure in the world," she proclaimed fervently.

"Or out of it," Gene confirmed grudgingly.

"And an incredibly exciting skull," Es finished.

It was characteristic of us that Es should have been the one to really break the ice with Helen. Like most intellectuals, we were rather timid, always setting up barriers against other people. We clung to adolescence and the college, although all of us but Gene had been graduated from it. Instead of getting out into the real world, we lived by sponging off our parents and doing academic odd jobs for the professors. (Es had a few private students.) Here in our home city we had status, you see. We were looked upon as being frightfully clever and sophisticated, the local "bohemian set" (though Lord knows we were anything but that). Whereas out in the real world we'd have been greenhorns.

We were scared of the world, you see. Scared that it would find out that all our vaunted abilities and projects didn't amount to much—and that as for solid achievements, there just hadn't been any. Es was only a mediocre artist; she was afraid to learn from the great, especially the living great, for fear her own affected little individuality would be engulfed. Louis was no philosopher; he merely cultivated a series of intellectual enthusiasms, living in a state of feverish private—and fruitless—excitement over the thoughts of other men. My own defense against reality consisted of knowingness and a cynical attitude; I had a remarkable packrat accumulation of information; I had a line on everything—and also always knew why it wasn't worth bothering with. As for Gene, he was the best of us and also the worst. A bit younger, he still applied himself to his studies, and showed promise in nuclear physics and math. But something, perhaps his small size and puritanical farm background, had made him moody and contrary, and given him an inclination toward physical violence that threatened some day to get him into real trouble. As it was, he'd had his license taken away for reckless driving. And several times we'd had to intervene—once unsuccessfully—to keep him from getting beaten up in bars.

We talked a great deal about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

our "work." Actually we spent much more time reading magazines and detective stories, lazing around, getting drunk, and conducting our endless intellectual palavers.

If we had one real virtue, it was our loyalty to each other, though it wouldn't take a cynic to point out that we desperately needed each other for an audience. Still, there was some genuine feeling there.

In short, like many people on a planet where mind is wakening and has barely become aware of the eon-old fetters and blindfolds oppressing it, and has had just the faintest glimpse of its tremendous possible future destiny, we were badly cowed—frightened, frustrated, self-centered, slothful, vain, pretentious.

Considering how set we were getting in those attitudes, it is all the more amazing that Helen had the tremendous effect on us that she did. For within a month of meeting her, our attitude toward the whole world had sweetened, we had become genuinely interested in people instead of being frightened of them, and we were beginning to do real creative work. An astonishing achievement for an unknown little waitress!

It wasn't that she took us in hand or set us an example, or anything like that. Quite the opposite. I don't think that Helen was responsible for a half dozen positive statements (and only one really impulsive act) during the whole time we knew her. Rather, she was like a Great Books discussion leader, who never voices an opinion of his own, but only leads other people to voice theirs—as an intellectual midwife.

Louis and Gene and I would drop over to Es's, say, and find Helen getting dressed behind the screen or taking a cup of tea after a session of posing. We'd start a discussion and for a while Helen would listen dreamily, just another shadow in the high old shadowy room. But then those startling little questions of hers would begin to come, each one opening a new vista of thought. By the time the discussion was finished—which might be at the Blue Moon bar or under the campus maples or watching the water ripple in the old coal pits—we'd have got somewhere. Instead of ending in weary shoulder-shrugging or cynical grousing at the world or getting drunk out of sheer frustration, we'd finish up with a plan—some facts to check, something to write or shape to try.

And then, people! How would we ever have got close to people without Helen? Without Helen, Old Gus would have stayed an ancient and bleary-eyed dishwasher at Benny's. But with Helen, Gus became for us what he really was—a figure of romance who had sailed the Seven Seas,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who had hunted for gold on the Orinoco with twenty female Indians for porters (because the males were too lazy and proud to hire out to do anything) and who had marched at the head of his Amazon band carrying a newborn baby of one of the women in his generous arms (because the women assured him that a manchild was the only burden a man might carry without dishonor.

Even Gene was softened in his attitudes. I remember once when two handsome truckdrivers picked up Helen at the Blue Moon. Instantly Gene's jaw muscles bulged and his eyes went blank and he began to wag his right shoulder—and I got ready for a scene. But Helen said a word here and there, threw in a soft laugh, and began to ask the truckdrivers her questions. In ten minutes we were all at ease and the four of us found out things we'd never dreamed about dark highways and diesels and their proud, dark-souled pilots (so like Gene in their temperaments).

But it was on us as individuals that Helen's influence showed up the biggest. Es's sculptures acquired an altogether new scope. She dropped her pet mannerisms without a tear and began to take into her work whatever was sound and good. She rapidly developed a style that was classical and yet had in it something that was wholly of the future. Es is getting recognition now and her work is still good, but there was a magic about her "Helenic Period" which she can't recapture. The magic still lives in the pieces she did at that time—particularly in a nude of Helen that has all the serenity and purpose of the best ancient Egyptian work, and something much more. As we watched that piece take form, as we watched the clay grow into Helen under Es's hands, we dimly sensed that in some indescribable way Helen was growing into Es at the same time, and Es into Helen. It was such a beautiful, subtle relationship that even Gene couldn't be jealous.

At the same time Louis gave over his fickle philosophical flirtations and found the field of inquiry for which he'd always been looking—a blend of semantics and introspective psychology designed to chart the chaotic inner world of human experience. Although his present intellecutal tactics lack the brilliance they had when Helen was nudging his mind, he still keeps doggedly at the project, which promises to add a whole new range of words to the vocabulary of psychology and perhaps of the English language.

Gene wasn't ripe for creative work, but from being a merely promising student he became a brilliant and very industrious one, rather to the surprise of his professors. Even with the cloud that now overhangs his life and darkens his reputation, he has man-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aged to find worthwhile employment on one of the big nuclear projects.

As for myself, I really began to write. Enough said.

We sometimes used to speculate as to the secret of Helen's effect on us, though we didn't by any means give her all the credit in those days. We had some sort of theory that Helen was a completely "natural" person, a "noble savage" (from the kitchen), a bridge to the world of proletarian reality. Es once said that Helen couldn't have had a Freudian childhood, whatever she meant by that. Louis spoke of Helen's unthinking social courage and Gene of the catalytic effect of beauty. And sometimes we attributed Helen's influence merely to some difference between her life pattern and ours.

Oddly, in these discussions we never referred to that strange, electric experience we'd all had when we first met Helen—that tearing moment when we'd looked back from the doorway. We were always strangely reticent there. And none of us ever voiced the conviction that I'm sure all of had at times: that our social and psychoanalytic theories weren't worth a hoot when it came to explaining Helen, that she possessed powers of feeling and mind (mostly concealed) that set her utterly apart from every other inhabitant of the planet Earth, that she was like a being from another, far saner and lovelier world.

That conviction isn't unusual, come to think of it. It's the one every man has about the girl he loves. Which brings me to my own secret explanation of Helen's effect on me (though not on the others).

It was simply this. I loved Helen and I knew Helen loved me. And that was quite enough.

It happened scarcely a month after we'd met. We were staging a little party at Es's. Since I was the one with the car, I was assigned to pick up Helen at Benny's when she got through. On the short drive I passed a house that held unpleasant memories for me. A girl had lived there whom I'd been crazy about and who had turned me down. (No, let's be honest, I turned her down, though I very much wanted her, because of some tragic cowardice, the memory of which always sears me like a hot iron.)

Helen must have guessed something from my expression, for she said softly, "What's the matter, Larry?" and then, when I ignored the question, "Something about a girl?"

She was so sympathetic about it that I broke down and told her the whole story, sitting in the parked and lightless car in front of Es's. I let myself go and lived through the whole thing again, with all its biting shame. When I was finished I looked up from the steering wheel. The streetlight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made a pale aureole around Helen's head and a paler one where the white angora sweater covered her shoulders. The upper part of her face was in darkness, but a bit of light touched her full lips and a narrow, almost fennec—or fox-like chin.

"You poor kid," she said softly, and the next moment we were kissing each other, and a feeling of utter relief and courage and power was budding deep inside me.

A bit later she said to me something that even at the time I realized was very wise.

"Let's keep this between you and me, Larry," she said. "Let's not mention it to the others. Let's not even hint." She paused, and then added, a trifle unhappily, "I'm afraid they wouldn't appreciate it. Sometime, I hope—but not quite yet."

I knew what she meant. That Gene and Louis and even Es were only human—that is, irrational—in their jealousies, and that the knowledge that Helen was my girl would have put a damper on the exciting but almost childlike relationship of the five of us (as the fact of Es's and Gene's love would never have done. Es was a rather cold, awkward girl, and Louis and I seldom grudged poor, angry Gene her affection.)

So when Helen and I dashed in and found the other berating Benny for making Helen work overtime, we agreed that he was an unshaven and heartless louse, and in a little while the party was going strong and we were laughing and talking unconstrainedly. No one could possibly have guess that a new and very lovely factor had been added to the situation.

After that evening everything was different for me. I had a girl. Helen was (why not say the trite things, they're true) my goddess, my worshipper, my slave, my ruler, my inspiration, my comfort, my refuge—oh, I could write books about what she meant to me.

I guess all my life I will be writing books about that.

I could write pages describing just one of the beautiful moments we had together. I could drown myself in the bitter ghosts of sensations. Rush of sunlight through her hair. Click of her heels on a brick sidewalk. Light of her presence brightening a mean room. Chase of unearthly expressions across her sleeping face.

Yet it was on my mind that Helen's love had the greatest effect. It unfettered my thoughts, gave them passage into a far vaster cosmos.

One minute I'd be beside Helen, our hands touching lightly in the dark, a shaft of moonlight from the dusty window silvering her hair. The next, my mind would be a billion miles up, hovering like an irridescent insect

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over the million bright worlds of existence.

Or I'd be surmounting walls inside my mind—craggy, dire ramparts that have been there since the days of the cave man.

Or the universe would become a miraculous web, with Time the spider. I couldn't see all of it—no creature could see a trillionth of it in all eternity—but I would have a sense of it all.

Sometimes the icy beauty of those moments would become too great, and I'd feel a sudden chill of terror. Then the scene around me would become a nightmare and I'd half expect Helen's eyes to show a catlike gleam and slit, or her hair to come rustlingly alive, or her arms to writhe bonelessly, or her splendid skin to slough away, revealing some black and antlike form of dread.

Then the moment would pass and everything would be sheer loveliness again, richer for the fleeting terror.

My mind is hobbled once more now, but I still know the taste of the inward freedom that Helen's love brought.

You might think from this that Helen and I had a lot of times alone together. We hadn't—we couldn't have, with the Gang. But we had enough. Helen was clever at arranging things. They never suspected us.

Lord knows there were times I yearned to let the Gang in on our secret. But then I would remember Helen's warning and see the truth of it.

Let's face it. We're all of us a pretty vain and possessive people. As individuals, we cry for attention. We jockey for admiration. We swim or sink according to whether we feel we're being worshipped or merely liked. We demand too much of the person we love. We want them to be a never-failing prop to our ego.

And then if we're lonely and happen to see someone else loved, the greedy child wakes, the savage stirs, the frustrated Puritan clenches his teeth. We seethe, we resent, we hate.

No, I saw that I couldn't tell the others about Helen and myself. Not Louis. Not even Es. And as for Gene, I'm afraid that with his narrow-minded upbringing, he'd have been deeply shocked by what he'd have deduced about our relationship. We were supposed, you know, to be "wild" young people, "bohemians." Actually we were quite straight-laced—Gene especially, the rest of us almost as much.

I knew how I would have felt if Helen had happened to become Louis's or Gene's girl. That says it.

To tell the truth, I felt a great deal of admiration for the Gang, because they could do alone what I was only doing with Helen's love. They were enlarging their minds, becoming creative, working and playing hard—and doing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it without my reward. Frankly, I don't know how I could have managed it myself without Helen's love. My admiration for Louis, Es, and Gene was touched with a kind of awe.

And we really were getting places. We had created a new mind-spot on the world, a sprouting-place for thought that wasn't vain or self-conscious, but concerned wholly with its work and its delights. The Gang was forming itself into a kind of lens for viewing the world, outside and in.

Any group of people can make themselves into that sort of lens, if they really want to. But somehow they seldom get started. They don't have the right inspiration.

We had Helen.

Always, but mostly in unspoken thoughts, we'd come back to the mystery of how she had managed it. She was mysterious, all right. We'd known her some six months now, and we were as much in the dark about her background as when we first met her. She wouldn't tell anything even to me. She'd come from "places." She was a "drifter." She liked "people." She told us al sorts of fascinating incidents, but whether she'd been mixed up in them herself or just heard them at Benny's (she could have made a Trappist jabber) was uncertain.

We sometimes tried to get her to talk about her past. But she dodged our questions easily and we didn't like to press them.

You don't cross-examine Beauty.

You don't demand that a Great Books discussion leader state his convictions.

You don't probe a goddess about her past.

Yet this vagueness about Helen's past caused us a certain uneasiness. She'd drifted to us. She might drift away.

If we hadn't been so involved in our thought-sprouting, we'd have been worried. And if I hadn't been so happy, and everything so smoothly perfect, I'd have done more than occasionally ask Helen to marry me and hear her answer, "Not now, Larry."

Yes, she was mysterious.

And she had her eccentricities.

For one thing, she insisted on working at Benny's although she could have had a dozen better jobs. Benny's was her window on the main street of life, she said.

For another, she'd go off on long hikes in the country, even in the snowiest weather. I met her coming back from one and was worried, tried to be angry. But she only smiled.

Yet, when spring came round again and burgeoned into summer, she would never go swimming with us in our favorite coal pit.

The coal pits are a place where they once strip-mined for the stuff where it came to the surface. Long ago the huge holes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were left to fill with water and their edges to grow green with grass and trees. They're swell for swimming.

But Helen would never go to our favorite, which was one of the biggest and yet the least visited—and this year the water was unusually high. We changed to suit her, of course, but because the one she didn't like happened to be near the farmhouse of last August's "rural monster" scare, Louis joshed her.

"Maybe a monster haunts the pool," he said. "Maybe it's a being come from another world on a flying disk."

He happened to say that on a lazy afternoon when we'd been swimming at the new coal pit and were drying on the edge, having cigarettes. Louis' remark started us speculating about creatures from another world coming secretly to visit Earth—their problems, especially how they'd disguise themselves.

"Maybe they'd watch from a distance," Gene said. "Television, supersensitive microphones."

"Or clairvoyance, clairaudience," Es chimed, being rather keen on parapsychology.

"But to really mingle with people . . ." Helen murmured. She was stretched on her back in white bra and trunks, looking deep into the ranks of marching clouds. Her olive skin tanned to an odd hue that went bewitchingly with her hair. With a sudden and frightening poignancy I was aware of the catlike perfection of her slim body.

"The creature might have some sort of elaborate plastic disguise," Gene began doubtfully.

"It might have a human form to begin with," I ventured. "You know, the idea that Earth folk are decayed interstellar colonists."

"It might take possession of some person here," Louis cut in. "insinuate its mind or even itself into the human being."

"Or it might grow itself a new body," Helen murmured sleepily.

That was one of the half dozen positive statements she ever made.

Then we got to talking about the motives of such an alien being. Whether it would try to destroy men, or look on us as cattle, or study us, or amuse itself with us, or what not.

Here Helen joined in again, distant-eyed but smiling. "I know you've all laughed at the comic-book idea of some Martian monster lusting after beautiful white women. But has it ever occurred to you that a creature from outside might simply and honestly fall in love with you?"

That was another of Helen's rare and positive statements.

The idea was engaging and we tried to get Helen to expand it, but she wouldn't. In fact, she was rather silent the rest of that day.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As the summer began to mount toward its crests of heat and growth, the mystery of Helen began to possess us more often—that, and a certain anxiety about her.

There was a feeling in the air, the sort of uneasiness that cats and dogs get when they are about to lose their owner.

Without exactly knowing it, without a definite word being said, we were afraid we might lose Helen.

Partly it was Helen's own behavior. For once she showed a kind of restlessness, or rather preoccupation. At Benny's she no longer took such an interest in "people."

She seemed to be trying to solve some difficult personal problem, nerve herself to make some big decision.

Once she looked at us and said, "You know, I like you kids terribly." Said it the way a person says it when he knows he may have to lose what he likes.

And then there was the business of the Stranger.

Helen had been talking quite a bit with a strange man, not at Benny's, but walking in the streets, which was unusual. We didn't know who the Stranger was. We hadn't actually seen him face to face. Just heard about him from Benny and glimpsed him once or twice. Yet he worried us.

Understand, our happiness went on, yet faintly veiling it was this new and ominous mist.

Then one night the mist took definite shape. It happened on an occasion of celebration. After a few days during which we'd sensed they'd been quarreling, Es and Gene had suddenly announced that they were getting married. On an immediate impulse we'd all gone to the Blue Moon.

We were having the third round of drinks, and kidding Es because she didn't seem very enthusiastic, almost a bit grumpy—when he came in.

Even before he looked our way, before he drifted up to our table, we knew that this was the Stranger.

He was a rather slender man, fair haired like Helen. Otherwise he didn't look like her, yet there was a sense of kinship. Perhaps it lay in his poise, his wholly casual manner.

As he came up, I could feel myself and the others getting tense, like dogs at the approach of the unknown.

The Stranger stopped by our table and stood looking at Helen as if he knew her. The four of us realized more than ever that we wanted Helen to be ours alone (and especially mine), that we hated to think of her having close ties with anyone else.

What got especially under my skin was the suggestion that there was some kinship between the Stranger and Helen, that behind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his proud, remote-eyed face, he was talking to her with his mind.

Gene apparently took the Stranger for one of those unpleasant fellows who strut around bars looking for trouble—and proceeded to act as if he were one of those same fellows himself. He screwed his delicate features into a cheap frown and stood up as tall as he could, which wasn't much. Such tough-guy behavior, always a symptom of frustration and doubts of masculinity, had been foreign to Gene for some months. I felt a pulse of sadness—and almost winced when Gene opened the side of his mouth and began, "Now look here, Jos—"

But Helen laid her hand on his arm. She looked calmly at the Stranger for a few more moments and then she said, "I won't talk to you that way. You must speak English."

If the Stranger was surprised, he didn't show it. He smiled and said softly, with a faint foreign accent, "The ship sails at midnight, Helen."

I got a queer feeling, for our city is two hundred miles from anything you'd call navigable waters.

For a moment I felt what you might call supernatural fear. The bar, so tawdry and dim, the line of hunched neurotic shoulders, the plump dice-girl at one end and the tiny writhing television screen at the other. And against that background, Helen and the Stranger, light-haired, olive-skinned, with proud feline features, facing each other like duelists, on guard, opposed, yet sharing some secret knowledge. Like two aristocrats come to a dive to settle a quarrel—like that, and something more. As I say, it frightened me.

"Are you coming, Helen?" the Stranger asked.

And now I was really frightened. It was as if I'd realized for the first time just how terribly much Helen meant to all of us, and to me especially. Not just the loss of her, but the loss of things in me that only she could call into being. I could see the same fear in the faces of the others. A lost look in Gene's eyes behind the fake gangster frown. Louis' fingers relaxing from his glass and his chunky head turning toward the stranger, slowly, with empty gaze, like the turret-guns of a battleship. Es starting to stub out her cigarette and then hesitating, her eyes on Helen—although in Es's case I felt there was another emotion besides fear.

"Coming?" Helen echoed, like someone in a dream.

The Stranger waited. Helen's reply had twisted the tension tighter. Now Es did stub out her cigarette with awkward haste, then quickly drew back her hand. I felt suddenly that this had been bound to happen, that Helen must have had her life, her real life,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before we had known her, and that the Stranger was part of it; that she had come to us mysteriously and now would leave us as mysteriously. Yes, I felt all of that, although in view of what had happened between Helen and me, I knew I shouldn't have.

"Have you considered everything?" the Stranger asked finally.

"Yes," Helen replied.

"You know that after tonight there'll be no going back," he continued as softly as ever. "You know that you'll be marooned here forever, that you'll have to spend the rest of your life among . . ." (he looked around at us as if searching for a word) ". . . among barbarians."

Again Helen laid her hand on Gene's arm, although her glance never left the Stranger's face.

"What is the attraction, Helen?" the Stranger went on. "Have you really tried to analyze it? I know it might be fun for a month, or a year, or even five years. A kind of game, a renewal of youth. But when it's over and you're tired of the game, when you realize that you're alone, completely alone, and that there's no going back ever—Have you thought of that?"

"Yes, I have thought of all that." Helen said, as quietly as the Stranger but with a tremendous finality. "I won't try to explain it to you, because with all your wisdom and cleverness I don't think you'd quite understand. And I know I'm breaking promises—and more than promises. But I'm not going back. I'm here with my friends, my true and equal friends, and I'm not going back."

And then it came, and I could tell it came to all of us—a great big lift, like a surge of silent music or a glow of invisible light. Helen had at last declared herself. After the faint equivocations and reservations of the spring and summer, she had put herself squarely on our side. We each of us knew that what she had said she meant wholly and forever. She was ours, ours more completely than ever before. Our quasi-goddess, our inspiration, our key to a widening future; the one who always understood, who could open doors in our imaginations and feelings that would otherwise have remained forever shut. She was *our* Helen now, our and (as my mind persisted in adding exultingly) especially mine.

And we? We were the Gang again, happy, poised, wise as Heaven and clever as Hell, out to celebrate, having fun with whatever came along.

The whole scene had changed. The frightening aura around the Stranger had vanished completely. He was just another of those hundreds of odd people whom we met when we were with Helen.

He acted almost as if he were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conscious of it. He smiled and said quickly, "Very well. I had a feeling you'd decide this way." He started to move off. Then, "Oh, by the way, Helen—"

"Yes?"

"The others wanted me to say goodby to you for them."

"Tell them the same and the best of luck."

The Stranger nodded and again started to turn away, when Helen added, "And you?"

"I'll be seeing you once more before midnight," he said lightly, and almost the next moment, it seemed, was out the door.

We all chuckled. I don't know why. Partly from relief, I suppose, and partly—God help us!—in triumph over the Stranger. One thing I'm sure of: three (and maybe even four) of us felt for a moment happier and more secure in our relationship to Helen than we ever had before. It was the peak. We were together. The Stranger had been vanquished, and all the queer unspoken threats he had brought with him. Helen had declared herself. The future stood open before us, full of creation and achievement, with Helen ready to lead us into it. For a moment everything was perfect. We were mankind, vibrantly alive, triumphantly progressing.

It was, as I say, perfect.

And only human beings know how to wreck perfection.

Only human beings are so vain, so greedy, each wanting everything and for himself alone.

It was Gene who did it. Gene who couldn't stand so much happiness and who had to destroy it, from what self-fear, what Puritanical self-torment, what death-wish I don't know.

It was Gene, but it might have been any of us.

His face was flushed. He was smiling, grinning rather, in what I now realize was an oafish and overbearing complacency. He put his hand on Helen's arm in a way none of us had ever touched Helen before, and said, "That was great, dear."

It wasn't so much what he said as the naked possessiveness of the gesture. It was surely that gesture of ownership that made Es explode, that started her talking in a voice terribly bitter, but so low it was some moments before the rest of us realized what she was getting at.

When we did we were thunderstruck.

She was accusing Helen of having stolen Gene's love.

It's hard to make anyone understand the shock we felt. As if someone had accused a goddess of abominations.

Es lit another cigarette with shaking fingers, and finished up.

"I don't want your pity, Helen. I don't want Gene married off to me for the sake of appearances, like some half-discarded mistress. I like you, Helen, but not enough to let you take Gene away from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me and then toss him back—or half toss him back. No, I draw the line at that."

And she stopped as if her emotions had choked her.

As I said, the rest of us were thunder-struck. But not Gene. His face got redder still. He slugged down the rest of his drink and looked around at us, obviously getting ready to explode in turn.

Helen had listened to Es with a half smile and an unhappy half frown, shaking her head from time to time. Now she shot Gene a warning, imploring glance, but he disregarded it.

"No, Helen," he said, "Es is right. I'm glad she spoke. It was a mistake for us ever to hide our feelings. It would have been a ten times worse mistake if I'd kept that crazy promise I made you to marry Es. You go too much by pity, Helen, and pity's no use in managing an affair like this. I don't want to hurt Es, but she'd better know right now that it's another marriage we're announcing tonight."

I sat there speechless. I just couldn't realize that that drunken, red-faced poppinjay was claiming that Helen was his girl, his wife to be.

Es didn't look at him. "You cheap little beast," she whispered.

Gene went white at that, but he kept on smiling.

"Es may not forgive me for this," he said harshly, "but I don't think it's me she's jealous of. What gets under her skin is not so much losing me to Helen as losing Helen to me."

Then I could find words.

But Louis was ahead of me. He put his hand firmly on Gene's shoulder.

"You're drunk, Gene," he said, "and you're talking like a drunken fool. Helen's my girl."

They started up, both of them, Louis's hand still on Gene's shoulder.

Then, instead of hitting each other, they looked at me.

Because I had risen too.

"But . . ." I began, and faltered.

Without my saying it, they knew.

Louis's hand dropped away from Gene.

All of us looked at Helen. A cold, terribly hurt, horribly disgusted look.

Helen blushed and looked down. Only much later did I realize it was related to the look she'd given the four of us that first night at Benny's.

". . . but I fell in love with all of you," she said softly.

Then we did speak, or rather Gene spoke for us. I hate to admit it, but at the time I felt a hot throb of pleasure at all the unforgivable things he called Helen. I wanted to see the lash laid on, the stones thud.

Finally he called her some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

names that were a little worse.

Then Helen did the only impulsive thing I ever knew her to do.

She slapped Gene's face. Once. Hard.

There are only two courses a person can take when he's been rebuked by a goddess, even a fallen goddess. He can grovel and beg forgiveness. Or he can turn apostate and devil worshipper.

Gene did the latter.

He walked out of the Blue Moon, blundering like a blind drunk.

That broke up the party, and Gus and the bartender, who'd been about to interfere, returned relievedly to their jobs.

Louis went off to the bar. Es followed him. I went to the far end myself, under the writhing television screen, and ordered a double scotch.

Beyond the dozen intervening pairs of shoulders, I could see that Es was trying to act shameless. She was whispering things to Louis. At the same time, and even more awkwardly, she was flirting with one of the other men. Every once in a while she would laugh shrilly, mirthlessly.

Helen didn't move. She just sat at the table, looking down, the half smile fixed on her lips. Once Gus approached her, but she shook her head.

I ordered another double scotch. Suddenly my mind began to work furiously on three levels.

On the first I was loathing Helen. I was seeing that all she'd done for us, all the mind-spot, all the house of creativity we'd raised together, had been based on a lie. Helen was unutterably cheap, common.

Mostly, on that level, I was grieving for the terrible wrong I felt she'd done me.

The second level was entirely different. There an icy spider had entered my mind from realms undreamt. There sheer supernatural terror reigned. For there I was adding up all the little hints of strangeness we'd had about Helen. The Stranger's words had touched it off and now a thousand details began to drop into place: the coincidence of her arrival with the flying disc, rural monster, and hypnotism scare: her interest in people, like that of a student from a far land; the impression she gave of possessing concealed powers; her pains never to say anything definite, as if she were on guard against imparting some forbidden knowledge; her long hikes into the country; her aversion for the big and yet seldom-visited coal pit (big and deep enough to float a liner or hide a submarine); above all, that impression of *unearthliness* she'd at times given us all, even when we were most under her spell.

And now this matter of a ship sailing at midnight. From the Great Plains.

What sort of ship?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On that level my mind shrank from facing the obvious result of its labor. It was too frighteningly incredible, too far from the world of the Blue Moon and Benny's and cheap little waitresses.

The third level was far mistier, but it was there. At least I tell myself it was there. On this third level I was beginning to see Helen in a better light and the rest of us in a worse. I was beginning to see the lovelessness behind our idea of love—and the faithfulness, to the best in us, behind Helen's faithfulness. I was beginning to see how hateful, how like spoiled children, we'd been acting.

Of course, maybe there wasn't any third level in my mind at all. Maybe that only came afterwards. Maybe I'm just trying to flatter myself that I was a little more discerning, a little "bigger" than the others.

Yet I like to think that I turned away from the bar and took a couple of steps toward Helen, that it was only those "second level" fears that showed me so that I'd only taken those two faltering steps (if I took them) before—

I remember the clock said eleven thirty.

Gene's face was dead white, and knobby with tension.

His hand was in his pocket.

He never looked at anyone but Helen. They might have been alone. He wavered—or trembled. Then a terrible spasm of energy stiffened him. He started toward the table.

Helen got up and walked toward him, her arms outstretched. In her half smile were all the compassion and fatalism—and love—I can imagine there being in the universe.

Gene pulled a gun out of his pocket and shot Helen six times. Four times in the body, twice in the head.

She hung for a moment, then pitched forward into the blue smoke. It puffed away from her to either side and we saw her lying on her face, one of her outstretched hands touching Gene's shoe.

Then, before a woman could scream, before Gus and the other chap could jump the bar, the outside door of the Blue Moon opened and the Stranger came in. After that none of us *could* have moved or spoken. We cringed from his eyes like guilty dogs.

It wasn't that he looked anger at us, or hate, or even contempt. That would have been much easier to bear.

No, even as the Stranger passed Gene—Gene, pistol dangling from two fingers, looking down in dumb horror, edging his toe back by terrified inches from Helen's dead hand—even as the Stranger sent Gene a glance, it was the glance a man might give a bull that has gored a child, a pet ape

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that has torn up his mistress in some inscrutable and pettish animal rage.

And as, without a word, the Stranger picked Helen up in his arms, and carried her silently through the thinning blue smoke into the street, his face bore that same look of tragic regret, of serene acceptance.

That's almost all there is to my story. Gene was arrested, of course; but you can't convict a man for the murder of a woman without real identity, when there is no body to prove a murder had been committed.

For Helen's body was never found. Neither was the Stranger.

Eventually Gene was released and, as I've said, is making a life for himself, despite the cloud over his reputation.

We see him now and then, and try to console him, tell him it might as easily have been Es or Louis or I, that we were all blind, selfish fools together.

And we've each of us got back to our work. The sculptures, the word-studies, the novels, the nuclear notions are not nearly as brilliant as when Helen was with us. But we keep turning them out. We tell ourselves Helen would like that.

And our minds all work now at the third level—but only by fits and starts, fighting the jungle blindness and selfishness that are closing in again. Still, at our best, we understand Helen and what Helen was trying to do, what she was trying to bring the world even if the world wasn't ready for it. We glimpse that strange passion that made her sacrifice all the stars for four miserable blindworms.

But mostly we grieve for Helen, together and alone. We know that she's gone a lot farther than the dozens or thousands of light-years her body's been taken for burial. We look at Es's statue of Helen, we read one or two of my poems to her. We remember, our minds come half alive and are tortured by the thought of what they might have become if we'd kept Helen. We picture her again sitting in the shadows of Es's studio, or sunning herself on the grassy banks after a swim, or smiling at us at Benny's. And we grieve.

For we know you get only one chance at someone like Helen.

We know that because, half an hour after the Stranger carried Helen's body from the Blue Moon, a great meteor went flaming and roaring across the countryside (some say up from the countryside and out toward the stars) and the next day it was discovered that the waters of the coal pit Helen wouldn't swim in, had been splashed, as if by the downward blow of a giant's fist, across the fields for a thousand yards.

The End

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here's a really wild novelet—a little far out even for science fiction—in which the all-knowing future keeps tabs on the unsuspecting past lest unlicensed time traveling alter the carefully monitored course of human history. However—as author Tenn makes wittily clear—even the best of watchdogs can have a bad day, a truism which would offer small consolation to Terton the scholar, who now finds himself stranded in the middle of Medieval New York City—on a stony thoroughfare crowded with crawling vehicles and pedestrians so primitive they still wear leather clogs and "bandages" called clothes!

Copyright 1950 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co., Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE REMARKABLE FIRGLEFLIP

BY WILLIAM TENN

Illustrated by LEO RAMON SUMMERS

BANDERLING, you are a fathead!

Yes, yes. I know. It is rather improbable that this message will reach you in the years that remain of your smug life; but if something, some new discovery—an unexpected warp in the plenum, say—should bring these pages to the surface, I want Thomas Alva Banderling to know that I consider him the most dilated, augmented and amplified fathead in the history of the race.

Excepting myself, of course. When I consider how happy I was puttering around my collection of dolik and spindfar, how splendidly my paper on *Gllian Origins of Late Pegis Flirg-Patterns* was progressing—when I recall that bliss only to be recalled in turn to the filthy, dripping necessities of my present vocation, I tend to become somewhat unacademic in my opinions of Banderling.

But now that I have informed Banderling of his cephalic obesity across fantastic gulfs of empti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness, what, after all, is left for me? What chance do I have of returning to the creamy towers of the Institute rising in plastic beauty from the septic Manhattan soil?

I like to dream of the scholarly exhilaration I felt the day we of Field Party Nineteen returned from Mars with a shipload of Punforg out of the Gllian excavation. I like to muse on my delighted reacquaintance with the problems I had left unsolved when the field trip was offered me. Banderling and his obscene radiation depressor? Why, that night was the first time I really noticed him!

"Terton," he asked suddenly, his face focusing sharp and studious in the screen of my benscope, "Terton, could you look in at my lab for a moment? I need an extra pair of hands."

I was startled. Beyond occasional meetings at Institute Assemblies, Banderling and I had had little reason for conversation. And it was fairly rare for an Associate Investigator to call on a full Investigator for mechanical assistance, especially when their fields were so different.

"Can't you get a labtech or a robot?" I asked.

"All the labtechs have gone. We're the only ones left in the Institute. Gandhi's Birthday, you know. I told my robot to package himself two hours ago when I thought I was leaving. Now I find there's nobody in Control to activate him again, and my depressor's started to excite. Won't take long."

"Very well," I sighed, necklacing both my flirgleflip and the dolik I had been examining with it. As I walked into the benscope, giving my necklace the required tugs for the opposite wing of the Institute, I had already ceased to wonder at the oddity of Banderling's request.

The dolik on which I had been working, you see, was the so-called Themtse Dilemna—a thoroughly fascinating business. Most of my colleagues inclined towards Gurkheyser's statement of the problem when he discovered it at Thumtse over fifty years ago. Gurkheyser declared that it could not be dolik because of the lack of flirg-pattern; and it couldn't be spindfar because of the presence of flirg in minute quantities; therefore it was a consciously created paradox and, as such, had to be classified as punforg. But, by definition, punforg could not exist at Thumtse . . .

My investigation, however, had convinced me that a flirg-pattern flirgled in a primitive sense—that is, only in the green. Was this sufficient proof of dolik? I thought so and was prepared to support that assertion in my forthcoming monograph. First, I intended to point out, no dolik has ever—

I wander. Once more I forget the reactions of my audience to this subject. If only this were not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so, if only on this one point—In any case, I was still considering the Thumtse Dilemna when I stepped out of the benscope into Banderling's lab. I was not at all prepared psychologically to make the obvious deductions from his nervousness. Even if I had, who could have imagined such psychotic behavior from an Associate Investigator?

"Thanks, Terton," he nodded, his necklace jangling with the gadgetry that physicists seem to find necessary at all times. "Would you hold that long bar away from the turntable and press into the grid with your back? Right." He sucked at the knuckles of his right hand; with his left, he flipped a toggle and clicked a relay shut. He turned a small knob past several calibrations, frowned doubtfully and moved it back to an earlier mark.

The turntable before me—a wheel-like affair whose spokes were resistor coils and whose hub was an immense mesotronic tube of the type used in a national benscope hookup—began to glow and whirl softly. Behind me, the grid was vibrating gently against my shoulder blades.

"There's—uh, nothing dangerous in what I'm doing?" I asked, moistening my lips at the roomful of fully operating equipment.

Banderling's little black beard shot up scornfully and the very hairs on his chest seemed to quiver. "What could be dangerous?"

Since I didn't know, I decided to feel reassured. I longed for Banderling's help in the process, but he was moving about rapidly now, sneering impatiently at meters and slapping at switches.

I had almost forgotten my uncomfortable position and the light bar I was holding, and was considering the middle passage of my paper—the section where I intended to prove that the influence of Gll was fully as great as Tkes upon later Pegis—, when Banderling's booming voice thrust a question into my consciousness.

"Terton, don't you often feel unhappy that you live in an intermediate civilization?"

He had stopped in front of the turntable and placed his overlong hands upon his hips in a slapping gesture which suggested somehow that he didn't find universal entropy proceeding satisfactorily.

"What do you mean—the Temporal Embassy?" I asked. I'd heard of Banderling's views.

"Exactly. The Temporal Embassy. How can science live and breathe with such a modifier? It's a thousand times worse than any of those ancient repressions like the Inquisition, military control or university trusteeship. You can't do this—it will be done first a century later; you can't do that—the sociological impact of such an invention upon your period will be too great for its pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sent capacity; you should do this—nothing may come of it now, but somebody in an allied field a flock of years from now will be able to integrate your errors into a useful theory. And what do all these prohibitions and restrictions accomplish; whose ends do they serve?"

"The greatest good of the greatest number in the greatest period of time," I quoted firmly from the Institute prospectus. "That humanity may continually improve itself by reshaping the past on the basis of its own historical judgment and the advice of the future."

He nodded a sneer at me. "How do we know? What is the master plan of those ultimate humans in that ultimate future where there is no temporal embassy from a still later period? Would we still approve of it, would we—"

"But Banderling, we wouldn't even understand it! Humans with minds compared to which ours would look like elementary neural responses—how could we grasp and appreciate their projects? Besides, there seems to be no such ultimate future—merely temporal embassy after temporal embassy sent by each age into the preceding one, the advice of each embassy in the period from which it came. Temporal embassies extending always into the past from the improving future, temporal embassies without end." I paused, out of breath.

"Except here. Except in an intermediate civilization like ours. They may go out to infinity as far as the future is concerned, Terton, but they stop in our time. We send nobody into the past; we receive orders, but give none of our own."

I puzzled over Banderling as he examined the greenly sparking mesotronic tube with a quantum analyzer and made an adjustment among his controls which excited it still futther. He had always been considered a bit of a rebel at the Institute—by no means bad enough for a Readjustment Course, however—, but surely he knew that the organization of the Institute itself was the first suggestion made by the Temporal Embassy when our age durated into its time-fix. I decided that the difficulty with his equipment which I was helping remove had irritated him out of normal reasoning processes. My mind trotted back to important items like spindfar problems, and I began to wish that Banderling would relieve me of the long bar so that I could denecklace my flirgleflip.

Not that I believed the Thumtse Dilemna could conceivably be spindfar. But it was possible, I had suddenly realized, for flirg—

"I've been told to call off work on my radiation depressor," the physicist's morose voice sliced into my thoughts.

"This machine, you mean?" I inquired rather politely, conceal-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing my annoyance both at his interruption and the sudden increase of warmth in the lab.

"Hum. Yes, this machine." He turned away for a moment and came back with a modified benscope projector which he placed in front of me. "The Temporal Embassy merely *suggested* it, of course. They suggested it to the Institute administration which put it in the form or an order. No reason given, none at all.

I clucked sympathetically and moved my perspiring hands to another position on the bar. The vibrations of the grid had almost worn a checkerboard callous into my back; and the though of being involved in an experiment with revoked equipment when I could be doing constructive investigation into dolik, spindfar and even punforg made me almost pathologically unsocial with impatience.

"Why?" Banderling demanded dramatically, throwing opened palms into the air. "What is there about this device which requires an ultimatum to stop its progress? I have been able to halve the speed of light, true; I may be able to reduce it even further in the tube, possibly to zero, eventually. Does such an increase in man's scientific powers seem dangerous to you, Terton?"

I pondered the question and was happy to be able to answer in all honesty that it didn't. "But," I reminded him, "there have been other direct revocations of projects. I had one. There was this dolik which was most curiously flirgled, evidently a product of Middle Rla at the peak of its culture. I had no more established the Rlaian origin when I was called to—"

"What have these infernal, incomprehensible thingumajigs to do with the speed of light?" he blasted at me. "I'll tell you why I was ordered to stop work on my radiation depressor, Terton, after eleven years of mind-breaking research. This machine is the key to time-travel."

The offence I had decided to take was forgotten. I stared at him. "Time-travel? You mean you've discovered it? We have reached the point where we are permitted to send a temporal embassy of our own into the past?"

"No. We have reached a point where journeying in time is possible, where a visit to the past may be made, where we *are able* to set up an embassy in a previous period. But we will not be allowed to do it! Instead, I drop my radiation depressor so that a century later, say, when the Embassy approves, some other physicist will build a machine using my notes and research—and be credited by history as the father of time-travel."

"Are you sure that it's time-travel? Possibly only a—"

"Of course I'm sure. Haven't I been measuring duration-gap

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since the first indication of electro-magnetic dampening? Didn't I lose two mesotronic tubes before the reverse field had even approached optimum? And didn't I duplicate the experience of the tubes with over fifteen rabbits, none of which have reappeared? No, it's time-travel, Terton, and I have to drop it. Officially, that is."

His tone confused me. "What do you mean 'officially?'"

Banderling drew a universal necklace across the screen of the benscope until it began to inglav. "Well, by officially—Terton, would you mind lifting the bar to your chest? A little higher. Fine. We'll be all set in a moment. Suppose someone from the present should be sent into the past as a result of a laboratory accident? Time travel would be an accomplished fact; the man who had built the machine that had accomplished it would be the accredited discoverer—the Temporal Embassy and all its plans notwithstanding. That would cause repercussions clear to the last dwindling curvature of time!"

I shivered, despite the extreme warmth of the lab at this point. The bar, which probably had been renucleied by a mesotronic tube, began curling around my chest, pressing me even harder against the vibrating grid.

'It would," I agreed. "If anyone were fool enough to try it. Seriously, though, do you really think your radiation depressor could send a man from our time into the past and bring him back? Assuming that you would be acceptable to the Temporal Embassy as the inventor?"

The physicist put the necklace aside as the benscope inglaved fully. "I couldn't effect the return with my equipment. But the Temproal Embassy would take care of that. Why, even they have only emissaries operating in the pre-intermediate civilizations—highly trained operatives working secretly and under great difficulties to make the necessary alterations in cultural evolution without the dislocation that would be caused by a Temporal Revelation to primitives. Anyone from our time who wandered into a previous period would be brought back in a hurry. And since the Temporal Embassy permits itself only advisory functions in an intermediate civilization, he'd be brought back alive with a suggestion to Administration that he be shut up somehow. But no matter what happened after that, the secret would be out, the mission would be accomplished. Administration would probably shrug its bureaucratic shoulders and decide to accept the existence of time-travel with its attendant Advanced Civilization status. Administration wouldn't object to that at all, once the thing were done. And the temporal embassies would ricochet irritation ahead for a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couple of million years; but they'd have to revise their plans. Their grip on history would be broken."

I saw it. Fascinating! Imagine being able to go back to Tkes, to Gll, to splendid Brzzin, and observe the actual flirgling of dolik! Imagine solving once and for all the Thumtse Dilemna by watching its creation! And what fantastic new knowledge of the flirglers themselves? We knew so little. I would be particularly interested in the relationship of punforg to—

Unfortunately, the dream was only that. Banderling's radiation depressor had been revoked. He would work on it no more after tonight. Time-travel was for another age. I slumped unhappily against the encircling bar.

"That's it, Terton!" the physicist yelled delightedly. "It's approaching optimum!" He picked up the universal necklace and held it over the screen of the benscope.

"I'm glad it's working again," I told him. "This grid has been punishing my back. If you'd denuclei the bar, I could finish some work with my flirgleflip right here in your lab. Really, Banderling, I don't want to rub salt on a favor, but I have research to do."

"Don't forget your training," he warned me. "Keep your eyes open and make careful mental notes of everything you see until you're picked up. Think how many investigators in your wing of the Institute would scramble to be in your place, Terton!"

"My place? Helping you? Well, I don't know—"

Then the turntable canted towards me in a flash of oozing green light; the bar seemed to melt into my chest and the grid to flow down my rigid back. Banderling's face tilted out of recognizable persepctive through shimmering heat waves. A great goblet of ear-piercing sound poured over my head and numbed my hearing, my mind my—Nothing was left but a memory of Banderling's grin.

I was cold. I was very cold.

I stood on a ridiculously stony thoroughfare, looking at a scene from Washington Irving, Mark Twain or Ernest Hemingway—one of the authors of *that* period, in any case. Brick buildings were scattered carelessly over the landscape like a newly-discovered trove of spindfar, metal vehicles crawled noisly past on both sides of me, people walked on the raised stone sections near the ugly little buildings with leather clogs laced tightly to their feet and bandages of various fabrics wrapping their bodies.

But above all, it was cold. Why, the city wasn't even air-conditioned! I found myself shivering violently. I remembered some drawing I had seen of an urchin shivering in just such a scene.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Medieval New York, the site of the Institute! 1650 to 1980, was it?

Abruptly I remembered the last moments in the lab. And understood.

I raised my fists to my face. "Banderling!" I shrieked at them. "Banderling, you are a fathead!"

This, so far as I can remember, was the first time I used a remark which was to become a cliche with me. Let me repeat it nonetheless, out of a full heart and an aching body—Banderling, you are a fathead! *Fathead!*

Somewhere, a woman screamed. I turned and saw her looking at me. Other people were laughing and pointing. I gestured impatiently at them, sunk my head on my chest and tried to return to consideration of my predicament.

Then I remembered.

I didn't know exactly when I was, but one thing all of these pre-intermediate civilizations had in common: a clothes fetish with severe penalties for those who disregarded it.

Naturally, there were other reasons. I wasn't certain which of them was most important here. For example, there was evidently no thermostatic control of the atmosphere in this area, and the season was the cooling third of the four ancient natural ones.

A gesticulating group had congregated on the raised cement surface facing me. A burly figure in blue, primitive weapons dangling from his belt, shouldered his way out of the crowd and started rapidly in my direction.

"Hey, you character you," he said (approximately). "Whadaya think this is? Free show? Huh? C'mere!"

As I said, I approximate. I found I was terribly afraid of this savage.

I retreated, whirled and began to run. I heard him running behind me. I ran faster; I heard him do likewise.

"C'mere!" a voice bellowed. "I said c'mere inda name adalaw!"

Was I in an era when the faggot was used on those who ran contrary to the psychotic edicts of society? I couldn't remember. I considered it essential, however, to find the privacy necessary for concentration on my next move.

I found it in a dark corner of an alleyway as I galloped past a building. A large metal receptacle with a cover.

There was no one close to me at the moment. I dodged into the alleyway, removed the cover, jumped into the receptacle and got the cover back over my head just as my pursuer puffed up.

Such an incredibly barbarous period! That receptacle — Unspeakable, unspeakable . . .

I heard a pair of feet trotting up the alley, coming back. After a while, several more pairs of feet arrived.

"Well, where did he go?"

"S'elp me, sergeant, if he didn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

go over that nine foot fence in back there. I coulda sworn he turned in here, coulda sworn!"

"An old guy like that, Harrison?"

"Pretty spry for an old guy, even if he was a gejenerate. Gave me a run."

"Gave you the slip, Harrison. Guy probably took off from some sanitarium or other. Better find him, men, before he terrorizes the neghborhood."

The feet slapped off.

I decided that my temporary escape from capture was balanced by the notice I had attracted in what seemed to be the higher echelons of the city's officialdom. I tried desperately, but futilely, to remember some of my terran history. What were the functions of a sergeant? No use. After all sixty years since I had studied the subject . . .

Despite my intense olfactory discomfort, I couldn't leave the receptacle. It would be necessary to wait quite a while, until my pursuers had given up the chase; it would also be necessary to have a plan.

Generally speaking, I knew what I must do. I must somehow discover an emissary of the Temporal Embassy and request a return to my own period. Before I could go about finding him, though, I would have to equip myself with such standard equipment as clothes.

How did one go about getting clothes in this period? Barter? Brigandage? Government work-coupons? Weaving them on one's own loom?

Banderling and his idiotic idea that my specialty would be useful in such a place! That fathead!

The cover of the receptacle lifted suddenly. A very tall young man with a vague and pleasant face stared down at me. He rapped on the metal of the lid.

"May I come in?" he inquired courteously.

I glared up at him, but said nothing.

"The cops are gone, pop," he continued. "But I wouldn't get out just yet. Not in your uniform. I'll lay chick if you tell me all about you."

"Wh-who are *you?* And what do you want?"

"Joseph Burns, a poor but honest newspaperman." He considered for a moment. "Well, poor, anyway. I want any such story as you may have to give. I was in that crowd on the sidewalk when the cop started to chase you. I ambled along behind. You didn't look like the kind of nut who enjoys parading his nakedness in the unsullied streets of our fair city. When I got to the alley, I was too tired to follow law and order anymore. So I took a rest against the wall and noticed the garbage can. *Ecce* you."

I shuffled my feet in the soft, stinking mass, and waited.

"Now, lots of people," he went

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on twirling the lid absently and looking down the street, "lots of people would say, 'Joe Burns, what if he isn't a nut? Maybe he just tried to draw to an inside straight in a strip-poker game.' Well, lots of people are sometimes right. But did I or did I not see you materialize out of relatively empty air in the middle of the street? That's what I care about, pop. And if so, how so?"

"What will you do with the information?"

"Depends, pop, depends. If it has color, if it has that cer—"

"For example, if I told you I came from the future."

"And could prove it? In that case, I would spread your name and photograph across the front page of the lowest, dirtiest, most scandal-mongering sheet in all this wide land. I refer to the eminent journal with which I am associated. Honest, pop, did you come from the future?"

I nodded rapidly and considered. What better way to attract the attention of a temporal emissary than by letting him know through an important public communication medium that I could expose his existence in this era? That I could destroy the secrecy of the Temporal Embassy in a pre-intermediate civilization? I would be sought out frantically and returned to my own time.

Returned to scholarship, to dolik and spindfar, to punforg and the Thumtse Dilemna, to my quiet laboratory and my fascinating paper on *Gllian Origins of Late Pegis Flirg-Patterns* . . .

"I can prove it," I said swiftly. "But I fail to see the value to you of such a situation. Spreading my name and photograph, as you put it—"

"Don't worry your pretty white thatch about that angle. Joseph Burns will do himself right well with a tabloid tango about a guy from the future. But you have to get out of that delicate den first. And to get you out of it you need—"

"Clothes. How does one get clothes in this period?"

He scratched his lower lip. "Well, money is said to help. Not crucial, you understand, but one of the more important factors in the process. You wouldn't have a couple of odd bills somewhere? No-o-o, not unless you have an unrevealed marsupiality. I could lend you the money—"

"Well, then—"

"But after all, how much suiting can be purchased in these inflationary times for a dollar twenty-three? Let's face it, pop: not much. The eagle at my shop doesn't scream until tomorrow. Besides, if Ferguson doesn't see much stink-value in the yarn, I wouldn't even be able to squeeze it onto my swindle sheet. It wouldn't be a good idea to fetch one of my suits down, either."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why?" The great quantity of wordage from above and garbage from below were having a very depressing effect on me.

"First, because you might be hauled away by the sanitation department before I returned and converted into ollyhock vitamins. Then, you're somewhat stouter than me and a good deal shorter. You don't want to attract attention when you step out into this cop-infested thoroughfare; and, in my suit, believe me, pop, you would. Add to all this the fact that the brave boys in blue may return at any moment and search the alley again—Difficult situation, pop, most difficult. We face an impasse."

"I don't understand," I began impatiently. "If a voyager from the future appeared in my period, I would be able to help him make the necessary social adjustments most easily. Such a minor item as clothes—"

"Not minor, not minor at all. Witness the ferment in the forces of law and order. Hey! That hammer-shaped ornament, there, the one on your necklace—it wouldn't be silver by any chance?"

Twisting my chin with difficulty, I glanced down. He was pointing at my flirgleflip. I took it off and handed it to him.

"It may well have been silver before it was renucleied for flirgling purposes. Why, does it have any special value?"

"This much silver? I hope to win the Pulitzer Prize it does. Can you spare it? We can get at least one used suit of clothes and half a drunk out of it."

"Why I can requisition a new flirgleflip at any time. And I use the large one at the Institute for most of the important flirgling in any case. Take it by all means."

He nodded and replaced the cover of the can over my head. I heard his feet going away. After a lenghy interval in which I developed several very colorful phrases with reference to Banderling, the garbage can cover was lifted again and some garments of crude blue cloth dropped upon my head.

"The pirate in the second-hand store would only allow me a couple of bucks on your gimmick," Burns told me as I dressed. "So I had to settle for work clothes. Hey, button those buttons before you step out. No, these. Button them. Oh—let me."

Having been properly fastened into the garments, I climbed out of the receptacle and suffered the report to tie shoes to my startled feet. Shoes—these were the leather bandages I had observed. My fingers itched for a crude flint axe to make the shambling anachronism complete.

Well, possibly not a flint axe. But a weapon like a rifle or crossbow did seem in order. Animal or vegetable fibers all over my skin. Ugh!

Glancing nervously up and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down the street, Burns led me by the arm to a badly ventilated underground chamber. There he flailed a path into an extremely long and ugly sectional conveyance—a subway train.

"I see that here, as elsewhere in your society, only the fittest survive."

He got a better grip on one man's shoulders and moved his feet into a more comfortable position on another's toes. "How-zat?"

"Those who are not strong enough to force their way inside are forced to remain where they are or to resort to even more primitive means of transportation."

"Honest, pop," he said amiringly. "You'll make terrific copy. Remember to talk like that for Ferguson."

After an appreciable interval of discomfort, we emerged from the train—somewhat like two grape pips being expectorated—and clawed our way to the street.

I followed the reporter into a building and stopped with him in front of a distinguished old gentleman who sat in a small cubicle wrapped in dignified, thoughtful silence.

"How do you do, Mr. Ferguson?" I began immediately, for I was pleasantly surprised. "I am very happy to find in Mr. Burns' superior the obvious intellectual kinship which I had almost—"

"Lay off!" Burns whispered fiercely in my ear as the old man backed away. "You're scaring the pants off the guy. Fourth floor, Carlo. And don't take pop here seriously. Not yet, anyway."

"Gee, Mr. Burns," Carlo remarked as he pulled a black lever and the cubicle containing the three of us shot upwards, "you sure do come in with characters. What I mean *characters.*"

The newspaper office was an impossible melange of darting humanity exhibiting complicated neurosis patterns among masses of paper, desks and primitive typewriters. Joseph Burns placed me on a wooden bench and scurried inside a glass-paneled office after various ritualistic wavings of the arm and crying of such phrases as "hiya tim, hiya joe, whadaya know abe."

After a lengthy period in which I almost became ill in the atmosphere of perspiration and frenzy, he came out followed by a small man in shirt sleeves who had a tic in his left eye.

"This him?" the small man asked. "Uh-huh. Well, it listens good, I don't say it don't listen good. Uh-huh. He knows the score, huh? He knows he sticks to this future gag no matter how they try to break him down, and, if he does break, nobody's to know we were in on it. He knows it, huh? He looks good for the gag, just old enough, just enough like a crazy prof. It looks good all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around, Burns. Uh-huh. Uh-huh, uh-huh."

"Wait–till you hear his line," the reporter broke in. "It'll positively make you color-happy. Talk about color, Ferguson!"

"I am unfamiliar with my prismatic possibilities," I told them coldly. But I must own to a great disappointment that the first representative individuals of the pre-intermediate civilization to hear a coherent account of my origin persist in idiotic droolings—"

The small man's left eye rapped out an impatient tic. "Can that free copy. Or save it for Burns: he'll take it down. Listen, Joey boy, we got something good here. Uh-huh. Two days before the world series starts and not a stick of red ink news in the town. And we can let it run all over the front page, more if it bounces up enough argument. I'll take care of the milking—the regulation comments by the university guys and science societies all around your copy. Meanwhile, you haul whoziz here—"

"Terton," I told him desperately. "My name, naturally—"

"Terton. Uh-huh. You haul Terton here over to a good hotel, get a decent suite—uh-huh, you can swindle sheet it, Joey boy—and start dragging copy out of him. Keep him isolated until tomorrow morning when there should be a nice thick smell started up. Tomorrow morning, uh-huh. Bring him over again and I'll have a bunch of psychs all ready to swear he's crazy and another bunch crying with tears in their eyes that he's normal and every word sounds like the truth. Get a couple of pics taken of him before you leave."

"Sure, Ferguson. Only trouble, the copy might recognize him as the guy who turned up stark naked in the street. He claims that nobody wears clothes in his period. The police department would have him certified and in Bellevue in no time."

"Lemme think." Ferguson walked around a swift little circle, scratching his nose and winking his eye. "Then we'll play it heavy. For keeps. Uh-huh, for keeps. Find out what he claims his job is—I mean, was—I mean, is going to be—uh-huh, and I'll have a couple of specialists in the same field lined up and insisting that he sounds just like one of them a thousand years from now. 'Swonderful what you can do with the financial resources of a great newspaper behind you."

"Isn't it though?" Burns admitted with a wry grin. "A great molder of public opinion."

"Just a moment," I insisted. "A thousand years is fantas—"

Tic went Ferguson's eye. "Get him out of here, Joey boy," he said. "He's your baby. I got work to do."

Not until we were in the hotel room was I able to convey to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the reporter my extreme disgust at the stolid lunacy of his culture. And his attitude before Ferguson. Why, he had acted as if he shared Ferguson's opinions!

"Take it easy, pop," the young man told me, his long legs spilling carelessly over the arm of a garishly upholstered couch. "Let us avoid bitterness and reproach. Let us live out our wealthy two days in harmony. Sure, I believe you. But there are certain proprieties to be observed. If Fearful Ferguson suspected that I ever believed anybody, let alone a guy who walks through busy traffic on Madison Avenue with his bare skin hanging out, it would be necessary for me to seek gainful employment not only with another firm, but possibly in another occupation. Besides, all you care about is attracting the attention of one of these temporal emissary queebles. To do that, you feel you have to threaten him with exposure, you have to make a splash. Believe me, pop, with the wire service tie-up we have, you'll make a splash that will moisten the ears of Eskimos fishing peacefully off Greenland. Australian Bushmen will pause between boomerangs to ask each other—'What's with this Terton character?'"

After much reflection, I agreed. As a result of Banderling's fatheaded use of me as a thrown gauntlet, I had to adjust myself to the customs of a ridiculous era. As they say, when in 200 A.D.—

By the time Burns had finished questioning me, I was exhausted and hungry. He ordered a meal sent up, and, despite my repugnance for the badly-cooked meal in unsanitary glazed pottery, I began eating as soon as it was set before me. To my surprise, the taste sensations were rather pleasant.

"You'd better crawl into the sack as soon as you've finished blotting up calories," Burns advised from the table where he was typing. "You look like a hundred-yard-dasher who's just tried to cop the cross-country crown. Bushed, pop, bushed. I'll run the copy over to the office when I get it done. I don't need you anymore tonight."

"The facts are sufficient and satisfactory?" I yawned.

"Not quite sufficient, but very satisfactory. Enough to give Ferguson a bunch of happy gurgles. I only wish—Oh, well, the date business for example. It would help out a lot.

"Well," I said sleepily, "I can think a bit more about 1993."

"No. We've been through that from every angle. Let it ride. Get yourself some sleep, pop."

The newspaper office had changed its population quality when Burns and I walked in. And entire section of the huge floor had been roped off. Signs had been posted at regular intervals reading "FOR SCIENTISTS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ONLY." Between them were other signs extending a welcome to "THE VISITOR FROM 2949," announcing that *"THE NEW YORK BLARE* SALUTES THE FAR FUTURE" and minor obscure comments concerning such things as "HANDS ACROSS THE TIME-STREAM" and "THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE ARE ONE AND INDIVISIBLE WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!"

Various elderly gentlemen milled about in the roped enclosure into which I was half-jostled, half guided. What I had come to recognize as flash-bulbs were expended blindingly and in quantity by troops of photographers some of whom lay prone on the floor, while others contorted on chairs, and still others hung suspended from trapeze-like affairs attached to the ceiling.

"It's sizzling and bubbling, Joey boy," Ferguson babbled as he writhed his way up to us and put several sheets of ink-fresh newspaper into the reporter's hands. "Some say he's a nut, uh-huh, and some say he's a resurrection of the prophet Nehemiah, but everybody in town is buying the paper. Two full days before the World Series and we've got a solid newsbeat. The other rags have their tongues hanging out for a look-in—they can kiss my basket. Nice slew of copy, uh-huh, nice angles. I had some trouble finding a couple of archaeologists who'd swear Terton was a member of the guild, but Ferguson never fail—uh-huh."

"An archaeologist?" I demanded. "Did you write that, Burns? I thought I made it clear that I was anything but an archaeologist. And you didn't say I was a *Martian* archaeologist, I hope? Let me see that paper."

Ferguson's left eye momentarily lost its tic and developed a positive oscillation. "Look," he growled hoarsely, as he pushed me into a seat, "don't go prima *donna on us now. No fancy stuff,* see! Uh-huh. That's right. You just stick to your story for today and tomorrow and you'll get yourself a nice hunk of the publisher's dough. If you're good enough, maybe you can even last through the first two games of the Series. Stick to your story—you came from the future, and that's all you know. Uh-huh, and stay away from facts!"

As he clapped his hands, calling the assembled scientists to attention, Joseph Burns slid into the chair next to mine.

"Sorry about the archaeologist complication, pop. But remember my copy is edited thoroughly at this end. What you told me just doesn't look good on paper. Martian archaeologist is close enough for the masses. If I were you I'd stay away from any detailed description of your occupation. It'll densify the air no end."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But Martian archaeologist is wholly inaccurate!"

"Come now, pop, you seem to forget that your primary objective is to attract attention, enough attention so that you'll be considered a dangerous big-mouth and sent back to your time. Well, glance to your right and occasionally to your left. Lots of attention, no? This is the way to do it: huge heads and lurid lines."

I was still considering my reply when I noticed that Ferguson had finished introducing me to the scientists, most of whom wore thin little curled smiles. "Uh-huh, and here he is! Terton, the man from the impossibly far future. He will speak to you himself, he will answer your questions. *The New York Blare* requests, however that the questions be brief and limited in number: just for the first day gentlemen. After all, our guest is tired and upset after his long, hazardous journey through time!"

The dignified questions sputtered at me as I rose to my feet. "Exactly *what* year do you claim as your origin, Mr. Terton? Or is the figure 2949 correct?"

"Quite incorrect," I assured the questioner. "The actual date in terms of a translation from the Octet Calendar which *we* use—Now, what was that rule about translating from the Octet?

"Could you explain the composition of a rocket motoer of your period?" someone else asked as I was deep in the complicated and unfamiliar methodology of calendar mathematics. "You speak of interplanetary flight."

"And interstellar flight," I added. "*And* interstellar flight. Except that rockets are not used. A complicated propulsion method the space-pressure spread is employed."

"And what exactly is a space-pressure spread?"

I coughed embarrassedly. "Something which, I am afraid, I had never the slightest interest in investigating. I understand it is based on Kuchholtz' Theory of the Missing Vector."

"And what—"

"Kuchholtz' Theory of the Missing Vector," I told them with a good deal of firmness, "has been the one thing that attracted my mind even less than the operation of a space pressure spread."

So it went. From triviality to triviality. These primitive though well-meaning savants, living as they did at the very dawn of specialization, could not even faintly appreciate how cursory my education had been in everything but my chosen field. In their period of microscopic knowledge and rudimentary operational devices it was already difficult for one man to absorb even a generalization of total learning. How much more so in my time, I tried to tell

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them, with separate biologies and sociologies for each planet—to mention but one example. And then, it had been so many years since I had touched upon the elementary sciences! I had forgotten so much!

Government (as they called it) was almost impossible to illustrate. How can you demonstrate to twentieth century savages the nine levels of social responsibility with which every child had thoroughly experimented before reaching adolescence? How can you make clear the "legal" status of such a basic device as the judicialarion? Possibly someone from my time deeply versed in this period's tribal lore and superstitions might, with the aid of rough parallels, give them a glimmering of such a thing as communal individuality (or mating by neurone-pattern)—but not I. *I?* Good cause I had to berate Banderling in my mind as the chuckles rippled higher.

"I am a specialist," I cried at them. "I need another specialist like myself to understand me."

"You need a specialist all right," a brown-clothed, middle-aged man said as he rose in the back row. "But not like you. Like Psychiatrist."

There was a roar of agreeing laughter. Ferguson rose nervously and Joseph Burns came quickly to my side.

"This the man?" the psychiatrist inquired of a blue-clad figure who had just entered the office. I recognized my chief pursuer of the day before. He nodded.

"Him, all right. Runnin' around *nood.* Should be ashamed. Or committed. I dunno which, honestly I don't."

"Just a moment," one of the scientists called out as Ferguson cleared his throat. "We've spent this much time: the least we can do is find out what he claims as his specialty. Some form of archaeology—Martian archaeology, no less."

At last. I drew a deep breath. "Not Martian archaeology," I began. "Not archaeology." That had been Banderling's misconception! Behind me, Burns groaned and slumped back into his chair.

"I am a flirgleflip. A flirgleflip is one who flips flirgs with a flirgleflip." There was an intake of breath heard everywhere.

I discussed my profession at great length. How the first dolik and spindfar discovered in the sands of Mars had been considered nothing more than geological anachronisms, how the first punforg had been used as a paperweight. Then Cordes and that almost divine accident which enabled him to stumble upon the principle of the flirgleflip; then Gurkheyser who perfected it and may rightly be considered the father of the profession. The vistas that opened as the flirg-patterns were identified and syste-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matized. The immense beauty, created by a race that even living Martins have no conception of, which became part of man's cultural heritage.

I told of the commonly accepted theory as to the nature of the flirglers: that they were an energy form which at one time attained intelligence on the red planet and left behind them only the flirg-patterns which were vaguely equivalent to our music or non-objectivist art; that being energy forms they left permanent energy records of all kinds in their only material artifacts—dolik, spindfar and punforg. I told proudly of my decision at an early age to dedicate myself to flirg-patterns: how I was responsible for the system of using present-day Martian place names to identify the sites on which the artifacts were found in their loosely scattered fashion.

Then, modestly, I mentioned my discovery of an actual contrapuntal flirg-pattern in some doliks—which had resulted in a full Investigatorship at the Institute. I referred to my forthcoming paper on *Gillian Origins of Late Pegis Flirg-Patterns* and became so involved in a description of all the facets of the Thumtse Dilemna, that it seemed to me I was back at the Institute giving a lecture—instead of fighting for my very identiy.

"You know," I heard a voice say wonderingly near me. "It almost sounds logical. Like one of those double-talk song hits or the first verse of Jabberwocky, it almost sounds as if it exists."

"Wait!" I said suddenly. "The sensation of flirg-pattern is impossible to describe in words. You must feel it for yourself." I tore open the rough cloth of my upper garment and pulled the necklace out. "Here, examine for yourselves the so-called dolik of the Thumtse Dilemna with my flirgleflip. Observe—"

I stopped. I was not wearing the flirgleflip! I'd forgotten.

Joseph Burns leaped up. "Mr. Terton's flirgleflip was exchanged for the suit of clothes he is now wearing. I'll volunteer to go out and buy it back."

My gratitude went with him as he picked his way through the amused scientists.

"Listen, guy," Ferguson told me wetly. "You'd better do something fast. Burns isn't a genius: he may not be able to work up a good out. There's an alienist here — uh-huh, an alienist — and they'll shove you behind soft walls if you don't angle something new. You're looking so bad, all our men are sitting on their tongues. They're afraid for their reps."

One of the younger scientists asked for the necklace. I handed it to him, the dolik still attached. He scrutinized both objects, then scratched them with his fingernail. He returned them to me.

"That necklace—ah—was what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you claimed could send you or teleport you anywhere on Earth, I believe?"

"Through a benscope," I pointed out. "You need benscope receivers and transmitters."

"Quite. And the small thing is what you call a—hum—a dolik. Thumbnail's Dilemna, or some such. Gentlemen, I am an industrial chemist, as you know. That necklace, I am convinced—and chemical analysis would merely confirm my experience is nothing more than a very fine spun glass. Nothing more."

"It's been renucleied for use with a benscope, you fool! What difference does the nature of the material make, when it's been renucleied?"

"Whereas the dolik," the young man went on equably, "the Martian dolik is really a treasure. Something quite unique. Oh, yes. Old red sandstone such as the average geologist can find in fifteen minutes. Old red sandstone."

It was a while before I could make myself heard again. Unfortunately, I lost my temper. The idiocy implicit in anyone's referring to the Thumtse Dilemna as old red sandstone almost made me insane. I shouted at them for their bigotry, their narrowness, their lack of knowledge.

Ferguson stopped me. "You'll get yourself put away for sure," he whispered. "You're almost frothing. Uh-huh, and don't think it'll do the sheet a bit of good for you to be dragged out of here in a straitjacket." I took a deep breath.

"Gentlemen," I suggested. "If any of you were suddenly to find yourselves in an earlier century, you would have great difficulty in using your specialized knowledge with the primitive equipment you would then find available. How much more must I—"

"You have a point there," a man with a stout face admitted. "But there is one thing, one means of identification always open to a traveler from the future."

"What's that?" Several academic necks were craned at him.

"Dates. Historical events. Things of this month or this year. The significant occurrences. You claim to regard this period as your past. Tell us of it. What will happen?"

"Unfortunately—" I made an unhappy gesture and the laughter sped forth anew, "my terran history is very fragmentary. One brief course in childhood. I was brought up on Mars, and even Martian history is rather vague to me. Historical dates I never could assimilate. As I told Joseph Burns last night, I remember only three around this general period."

"Yes?" Their interest was now almost tangible.

"First, 1993."

"What happens in 1993?"

"I don't know. But it seems to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have some great significance. Possibly a plague, an invention, the date of a masterpiece. Or possibly a date which was mentioned to me casually and which I've retained. Not very useful in any case. Then August, 1945. The atom bomb. Mr. Burns says this isn't particularly useful either since it is already several years in your past. Please remember that I have great difficulty with your calendar."

"What's the third date?" a voice called.

"1588," I told him hopelessly. "The Spanish Armada."

Chairs scraped. The scientists rose and prepared to leave. "Hold 'em," Ferguson shrilled at me. "Say something, do something," I shrugged.

"One moment." It was the young industrial chemist. "I think we can settle the hash of this hoax most definitely. I noticed in Mr. Burns' lurid little article that you said you had played on the Martian sands as a child. What were you wearing at the time?"

"Nothing." I was puzzled. "Some warm clothing. Nothing else."

"No helmet of any sort, say?"

"No. None at all."

He grinned. "Just some warm clothing. Yet we know that the temperature at the equator rarely rises above freezing. We also know that there is—practically speaking—no oxygen on Mars. The spectroscope has proven this over the years. *Warm* clothing, no oxygen helmet. Hah!"

I puzzled after their retreating, contemptuous backs as they left. This was one point I couldn't understand at all. What if their instruments showed only minute quantities of oxygen on Mars and a temperature below freezing? I had played in the Martian desert as a boy. No oxygen helmet, *some* warm clothing. These savages and their instruments!

"Better scram fast," Ferguson told me, the tic in his left eye batting unhappily. "The cop and the alienist are still out in the corridor. It don't look good for you and it don't look good for the sheet if they wrap you up. Better get out with the service elevator. Uh-huh, the service elevator."

I went down to the street, pondering how the temporal emissaries would get in touch with me now. Evidently in Joseph Burns' words, I hadn't made a sufficiently great "splash." Or had it been enough? Possibly one of the scientists was a temporal emissary, observing me and preparing plans to send me back to my own time before I could cause any more disruption in this period.

"Hi, pop. I called the office. Tough go."

"Burns!" I turned in relief to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the young man lounging against the wall of the building. The only friend I had made in this crazy, barbaric era. "You didn't get the flirgleflip. They'd bartered it, or sold it or lost it."

"No, pop, I didn't get the flirgleflip." He took my arm gently. "Let's walk."

"Where?"

"Find a job for you, an occupation into which you can fit your futuristic talents."

"And what would that be?"

"That is the problem, the nasty, difficult problem. Not many flirgles to be flipped in this period. That's all you can do well and you're too old to learn another profession. Yet a man must eat. If he doesn't he gets odd feelings and strange, mournful quaverings in his abdomen. Ah, well."

"Evidently, you were wrong about the temporal emissary."

"No, I wasn't. You attracted their attention. You've been contacted."

"By whom?"

"Me."

I would have stopped in astonishment directly in the path of a speeding vehicle if Burns' pressure on my arm hadn't kept me moving.

"You mean you're a temporal emissary? You take me back?"

"Yes, I'm a temporal emissary. No, I don't take you back."

Completely confused, I shook my head carefully. "I don't—"

"You don't go back, pop. First, because this way Banderling is accused of destroying the right to live of a communal individual—namely you. This way the Institute decides that the radiation depressor will bear years of investigation and development before anything but completely stable individuals are allowed near it. Eventually time-travel will be discovered—and in the proper period—as the result of a textual cross-reference to Banderling's radiation depressor. Second, you don't go back because it is now impossible for you to blab loudly about temporal emissaries without getting into a walled establishment where they make guests wear their sheets like overcoats."

"You mean it was all deliberate, your meeting me and worming the flirgleflip out of my possession and convincing me that I must make a splash, as you put it, so that I am maneuvered into a position where nobody in this society will believe me—"

We turned right down a narrow street of little cafes. "I mean even more than that was deliberate. It was necessary for Banderling to be the kind of person he is—"

"A fathead?" I suggested bitterly.

"—so that the radiation depressor would be put on the shelf a sufficient number of years as a result of the 'Terton Tragedy.' It was necessary for you to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the profession and background you had, completely unfit for the needs of this period, so that you will be able to make no appreciable alteration in it. It was further necessary—"

"I though you were my friend. I liked you."

"It was further necessary for me to be the kind of person I am so that your confidence would be won by me as soon as you—er, arrived and the project worked properly. Also, being the kind of person I am, I am going to be very uncomfortable at what I did with you. This discomfort is probably also necessary for another facet of the Temporal Embassy's plans. Everything fits, Terton, into everything else—even the temporal embassy at the end of time, I suspect. Our plenum, I'm afraid, is fixed and unalterable. Meanwhile. I had a job to do."

"And Banderling? What happens to him when I fail to return?"

"He's barred from physical research, of course. But since he's young, he will manage to develop a new profession. And since the mores of your era are what they are, he will become a flirglefilp—replacing you in the community. He will have a Readjustment Course first, however. Which reminds me—I've been concentrating so hard on getting you a job you can do, I forget important things."

I mused on the irony of Banderling's supposed revolt being part of the plans of the Temporal Embassy. And on the pathos of my spending what remained of my lifetime in this insane age. Suddenly I noticed that Burns had detached the dolik from my necklace.

"One of those oversights," he explained as he pocketed it. "You shouldn't have taken it with you, according to our original plans. Now I'll have to see that it's returned as soon as I get you settled in your job. That dolik is the Thumtse Dilemna, you know. The schedule calls for its problem to be solved by one of your colleagues at the Institute."

"Who solves it?" I asked with great interest, "Masterson, Foule, Greenblatt?"

"None of them." He grinned. "According to the schedule, the Thumtse Dilemna is solved finally by Thomas Alva Banderling."

"Banderling," I cried as we paused in front of a grimy restaurant which had a *Dishwasher Wanted* sign in the window. "Banderling? That fathead?"

The End

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cartoon: Mendoza

". . . and just a stone's throw from the station."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM THIS DARK MIND

BY ROG PHILLIPS

If the late Rog Phillips was right—in this thoroughly absorbing glimpse of psychiatry 21st-century style—then our great-grandchildren may well see a day when flu epidemics end with a wise word to the men behind "Little Orphan Annie" and when M.D.'s are subordinated to psychodiagnosticians like Dr. Hugo Bard, who on one notable occasion—this one—not only forestalled a potential murderess but also simultaneously exposed a perfect murder which no one committed!

"HOUSE!" the polyanalyzer said.

"Home!" the patient, a rather plain blonde, said, too quickly — almost defensively.

A little white dot on the desk lit up. Dr. Hugo Bard put the phone to his face. The mouthpiece was form fitting to keep the sound out of the ears of his patients.

"Mr. David Green just canceled his appointment for today. He has the flu."

"Get me his M.D., Nancy."

"Fear!" said the polyanalyzer.

". . . ? Fear . . ." said the patient vaguely.

"Coat!"

"Fu- Mink!!"

"Water."

"Mud."

"Hello, Dr. Allan. This is Hugo Bard. I understand David Green has the flu."

"Yes. Glad you called, Hugo. Didn't know he was a patient of yours."

"I know. You M.D.s should stop being twentieth century and cross-index. Do you mean he has the flu or the symptoms?

"The symptoms, of course. Including a temperature of 101.4."

"That's bad," Hugo Bard said gravely. "I'd suggest you re-

Copyright 1953 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Illustrator: Dave Stone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

diagnose and come up with pneumonia. Hospitalization and fever induction for three days."

"I don't think it's warranted, Hugo," Dr. Allan said uneasily.

"Do you want me to get a Hearing on it?"

"No. No, I'll do it."

"At once. Rush over to his house. Tell him the lab tests brought it out. Be alarmed about it. It'll gratify him. Call me when his temperature is a hundred and five and three tenths."

"Papa," the polyanalyzer said.

"Poker — fireplace poker."

"Cold."

"Hot."

"Bright."

"Green!"

"Death."

"Suicide."

"Fresh."

"Eggs."

Hugo Bard shut off the polyanalyzer. "No, just lie there, Mary."

The patient relaxed, closing her eyes.

Hugo Bard lit a cigarette. In a moment the polyanalyzer typewriter began typing out the daily diagnosis sheet. Hugo's eyes followed the words as they materialized on the paper. When the typewriter stopped, he picked up the phone.

"Get me Mary's husband, Nancy. He'll be at work."

He smoked while he waited. The patient seemed to be asleep. The white dot glowed brightly.

"Hello? George Davis? This is Dr. Bard. The reason I called is that your wife is in immediate need of mental surgery."

"Mental surgery? What's that?"

"Nothing serious. She will be hospitalized and placed under drugs that lay her mind completely open. The factors that have brought on her present condition slipped past the public school psychodiagnosticians, as such things so often do. We must lift them out and plant a corrective lie."

"Gee. I don't know. We can't afford hospital right now. I know the insurance pays the bills, but — it would take someone to care for the kids when I'm at work . . ."

"If she had pneumonia would you force her to cook your meals?" Hugo Bard asked.

"No. Of course not."

"This is worse than pneumonia. I'm sorry I can't tell you how bad, but mental surgery is necessary. She should go from here to the hospital. Can you get off work and come to my office right now?"

"Oh — okay."

"One more thing. Do you agree with hospitalization? It will be for three days, and she won't know what happened."

"All right. I guess you know best. Go ahead with it."

Hugo flicked the phone bar.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Nancy? Get the hospital. Reserve a private room for Mrs. Davis. Now. Yes. An ambulance after her husband gets here. Send Mable in with the pre-hospital hypo. Five c.c.'s."

A moment later the starched nurse entered with the hypo on a tray, with swabs and alcohol.

"Nothing to worry about, Mary," Hugo Bard soothed. "Just something to relax you a little more for the next test." He was already swabbing a spot on her arm. The needle stabbed in, the five cubic centimeters of white fluid disappeared into her bloodstream. "Close your eyes and relax. We'll go to work again in a few minutes, Mary."

Hugo left the office with Mable. In the gleaming lab room she poured him a cup of black-as-ink coffee. "You look scared," she said.

He shook his head slowly. "The things we uncover! That patient in there — Thank God for the polyanalyzer or sometimes I would think my work was getting me. Of course, it could be getting the poly, too. Sometimes I think I was born in the wrong century. It would be so nice to live in the twentieth century with its crimes and insanity."

"Or the fourteenth, with its plagues and surgeons with unsterilized knives?" Mable said, smiling.

Hugo grinned. "They had those in the eighteenth and nineteenth, too. And don't forget that up until 2023 a surgeon could operate without being required to consult the patient's psychologist." He frowned. "The M.D.'s still don't like us. They still like to believe they're top dogs. This coffee is good. Will you marry me, Mable?"

"I'll ask my husband if it's okay," Mable said.

"Come to think of it, my wife's the jealous type. Begun when she was a year and a half. Another baby was put in the crib with her and accidentally jiggled one of her rattles. Her response was to grab it away. First success to a budding behavior pattern . . ."

"Give her mental surgery," Mable said. "Make her relive it and convince her she missed the rattle and hurt her finger."

"It's a thought," Hugo Bard said. "By the way, I ought to run you through the poly. You might be harboring ideas about murdering my patients so I could spend more time with you back here." He leered knowingly. "Have you ever thought of loading the needles with poison?"

Mable blinked. "What do you suppose that five c.c.'s was you just poured into Mrs. Davis's vein?" Her eyes twinkled. "Better have your head examined, doc."

"I let my barber do that. Only costs two dollars —"

Nancy stuck her head in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the door. "Dr. Allan is on the phone."

Hugo lifted his eyebrows in surprise. "I'll take it in my office."

Mary Davis was snoring softly on the couch. Even so, Hugo Bard was careful to keep his voice hidden in the phone.

"Yes, Dr. Allan?"

"It's about David Green. Last time I'll play second fiddle to a psychodiagnostician. He refused to accept my amended diagnosis and has gone to see another doctor. He refused to say which one he was going to, so we're stuck."

"I'm sorry, Allan. It's my fault. I should have hospitalized him for psychosurgery a week ago. I still don't know why though! The reason I didn't was that he is entering the composite high. His actions should have remained sane at this time. *Something* gave him the flu, however."

Dr. Allan's voice was testy. "Naturally. There are eighteen identified strains of virus, any one of which could have done it."

"And," Hugo's voice became just as testy, "if the flu was *caused* by the virus, everyone in the world would have it all the time. There's no immunity to flu."

"Then," Dr. Allan said, his voice edged with sarcasm, "what *did* cause his flu?"

"One of three things, I'm afraid. He's afraid of revealing a past violence, a current situation which he will solve by violence, or he has criminal knowledge connected with someone. We should have better cooperation. If you M.D.'s would only realize that all your patients should have psychodiagnosis —"

"I don't agree with your theories. What about the epidemics? The flu epidemic of last fall, for example? Most of my cases were children under ten years of age!"

"The cause of that epidemic was quite clear cut, if you'll remember, Dr. Allan. It began when Orphan Annie was legally adopted by the sinister Dr. Fey. Anxiety neurosis. As soon as we realized the specific cause and notified the comic strip syndicate, Warbucks came into the picture and managed to prove the adoption was illegal, freeing Annie. But you M.D.'s let over fifty children die of the flu because you *can't break out of the twentieth century.* I'm going to call the Bureau and see if I can't get a general alarm out on David Green. He has the potentialities for murder."

When he hung up, the white dot blinked brightly. "Mr. Davis is here," Nancy said.

"I'll talk to him in my other consultation office. Show him in. I'll be there in five minutes. First, get the Bureau on the phone for me. Dr. Arden."

When Dr. Arden, president of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the A.M.A. local answered, Hugo quickly sketched the picture, concluding with, "What I want is for all the ones he might go to to be contacted and asked to diagnose him as —"

"I realize what you want. Sorry. I'd like to, but we don't have the personnel to do that. Good lord, man, do you realize what an enormous task it would be to contact five thousand doctors in one afternoon? Let alone ask them to give a wrong diagnosis! If you're so sure, why not try the police?"

"It would disturb the patient. Anyway, the police wouldn't cooperate on anything so nebulous."

"I understand your problem there," Dr. Arden said. "It has to start sometime though. I'd suggest you contact them. Present your case. They'll turn you down, but they'll remember. Then if your patient does do something, you can remind them. A few thousand similar instances and they'll start cooperating."

"It's an angle. I'll do it. Thanks, Dr. Arden."

Hugo Bard hung up and went into his other office. George Davis was a short husky man. A steel worker at Bethlehem. Not too intelligent, but well adjusted to his body-type and station in life. Proud, innately kind, patient.

"I need your signature on some papers, Mr. Davis. There's nothing too seriously wrong with your wife, but she will be infinitely happier and much better adjusted with some minor mental surgery."

"But I don't want anything done that's going to change her any, doc. She's just a little upset."

Hugo smiled. "Did you ever beat her until she was genuinely sorry for something she did?"

"No! Has she been telling you that? I've never so much as slapped her — although sometimes it's been hard not to." George Davis grinned.

Dr. Bard answered his grin. "I think I'll explain just what's wrong, and show you how simple it will be to correct it. It won't be too accurate a picture, because I know only the arrows pointing toward it now. Under psychosurgery it will all come out and be altered.

"She has been searching for the father she wanted and didn't have."

"What's wrong with her dad? I know him. One of the finest."

"I know that. Too fine. I know one specific instance so far. He went into the living room to discipline Mary about something when she was thirteen. She flared up, grabbed the fireplace poker, and threw it at him. It missed him by less than an inch, and made a deep dent in the wall. She remembers that he turned pale. Then he turned and went out without saying another word.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Neither of them mentioned it ever again.

"Now this is what mental surgery will do. It will make her relive that experience, then it will be distorted for her, element by element, until it lies in her unconscious mind in a much different version. The new version will be that she picked up the poker, her father leaped quickly and took it away from her, then spanked her unmercifully, speaking to her very sternly. Isn't that simple?"

"Yes, but what good will it do? I mean . . ."

"There's more to it than that. You'll see by the results."

"I hope so. There's a guy at work that had mental surgery. He's one of the foremen now. Nice guy."

Nancy brought in the papers. Dr. Bard gave George Davis a pen to sign them. George scrawled his signature, then looked up. "Can I see Mary before . . ."

"She's in the next room. She's had the pre-hospital shot, a mild opiate to make her sleep."

"I want to see her anyway. Damn it —!" George Davis's lip quivered.

"I know, George," Hugo said quietly. "But you're true twenty-first."

"Damn right I am. We were headed toward a break-up. She didn't want it and I didn't want it, and we didn't know what was wrong. Only I wish it had been me."

"Not a thing wrong with you, George," Hugo Bard said.

"Like heck. You psycho-diagnosti-cians — by gosh I said it that time! — have a lot to learn yet."

Nancy came in. "The ambulance is here," she said.

"Good. You can go with her to the hospital if you like, George. She won't wake up though. Not for three days. You'll have to take it on the chin. And when she wakes up she won't seem different, but in a month or two you'll begin to see lots of difference. If you'll excuse me . . ."

Ten minutes later he was on the phone to the chief of police. After listening to him the police chief said, "Are you willing to sign a warrant for his arrest? If not we can't do a thing for you."

"If I told you," Hugo Bard said, "that I overheard two men making plans to rob a bank at eleven o'clock tomorrow, would you have men there, just in case?"

"Probably. I see what you're driving at. When the city fathers hand down orders that you medics can forecast crime I'll help you. Until then I can't do a thing — unless you sign a warrant."

"What's your name, captain?"

"O'Conner. Jim O'Conner. You have me interested. I can't do a thing, Dr. Bard, but — let me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know, please, how it comes out."

Nancy had been listening. She came into the office with a disgusted look. "Strictly twentieth century," she snorted.

"I wouldn't say so," Hugo said mildly. "He was interested. And he doesn't run the police department with an independent hand. He has to answer to his bosses. I think I'll discuss this at the next meeting. All of us psychodiagnosticians should be more police conscious. It would pay off eventually. What's on the books? This should have been David Green's two hours."

"Mrs. Garson at four," Nancy said.

Hugo made a wry face. "She has an inpenated mind — and lots of money."

"Inpenated?" Nancy blinked.

"Not in the dictionary. Look up inclavated and draw your own conclusions. I'm going to run over to the hospital and get Mary started. Be back at four."

When Dr. Hugo Bard stepped out of his car in the basement garage of the Psychosurgery Annex his manner had subtly altered, and he was consciously aware of it. Here, in a way, he was royalty. Every successful surgeon since the beginning of time knows the feeling, and lives for it. The surgeon is a king, his subjects the internes and nurses, his kingdom the incarnate manifestations of his specialty.

He took the elevator to the first level and signed in.

"Hello, Dr. Bard," a quiet voice said at his shoulder.

He turned. "Oh, hello Paul. And Alvin. Who's the newcomer?"

Paul introduced him. "Dr. Bard, this is John Newland. Allergy and psychology at N.Y.U. He wants to spend two years on psychocatharsis under you, if you have room."

"You can join us today, and we'll have a talk later, John."

"Yes, sir, Dr. Bard."

Hugo started walking slowly toward the elevator, the three internes respectfully a half pace behind him.

"The patient we are going to see," Hugo said, "is a good one to begin with. Quite common, though almost at the f.a. pause. They seldom get that far these days before being corrected. A sixty-forty personality, so it would have been murder rather than suicide. She suffered basic insecurity that required domination-compensation she never received. What I will do during surgery is take her back to key incidents where she sought justified punishment without receiving it, and give it to her. Then her Father-God archtype will be balanced. She will have a set of memories that tell her she has been punished when she deserved to be, by something that loved her, couldn't be hurt by her, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was capable of destroying her as well as protecting her. From herself as much as from environment. But of course, John, you've gone through all this in school. What you want and what you will get during your two years of internship will be observation of and experience with the techniques of catharsis under psychosurgery. To understand clearly all the time what is going on, you must learn to think in terms of the archtypes, because they are the common denominators. The mind is an organism whose vital parts are archtypes, just as the body is an organism whose vital parts are clearly defined organs. A defective gland in a child can often produce drastic effects on body structure by the time that child becomes an adult. A defective archtype can do the same to the growing mind. Here we are."

Hugo Bard and the three internes paused before a glass window. Through it they could see Mary Davis, asleep, her dull hair an unkempt mass under her head, her colorless lips partly open.

The double barrel of a tri-di video camera pointed down at her head from the ceiling. The boom of a mike went out from inside just below the observation window. And the observation window was just above a bank of instruments and controls.

Hugo Bard glanced at the chart beside the control board. He read it aloud for the benefit of the new interne. "Three c.c.'s of T.T.4C. at 3:05. The series of shots given the patient will have prepared her for surgery starting at nine o'clock. Eventually, John, you should learn how we tailor-make our mixtures for specific types. There are over a thousand specifics we draw on. The T.T.4C. mixture will reduce her temperature to ninety-six point four, about. That will put her at the bottom of her manic curve where we want her for the first stage of operation. The key to total recall of a gestalt is an emotion . . ."

Hugo was back at his offices by ten minutes to four. Mrs. Garson, gray hair youthfully permanented, was waiting. "Hello, Hugo," she gushed. He nodded, smiling absently. To Nancy he said, "Bring me the file on Green. I want to go over the poly reports in it." He strode on into his office and closed the door.

Nancy came in a moment later with the folio. "What about Mrs. Garson?" she asked.

"Have her wait. I'll get to her on time. Stay here for a minute, Nancy."

He thumbed through the layers of paper, and pounced on the one he was searching for. "Here it is," he said, mostly to himself. "I'm sure the polyanalyzer was wrong. It establishes interval, then bases it's conclusions on straight inter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

val. In rare instances that is false evaluation, because the mind can jump into high gear, then drop back. And look at this . . . Interval too short. Green completed the word in his mind before the polyanalyzer finished it. That gave him an extra fraction of a second to react. The poly recognized that only because it was confronted with a zero interval. I'm beginning to see what I missed — what is bothering me about Green avoiding his appointment today."

He looked up at Nancy. "Look at these, Nancy," he said. "You're interested in associations."

She stood beside him and looked at the paper.

"For house he said parlor. He wouldn't have thought of that word in connection with a house. It could only have been house: death in a house: funeral parlor: parlor. And down here — For horse he replied shoe — was he thinking shoot? The interval indicates shoe was the second word he thought of. The slowly expelled breath after it, everything indicates he has murder on his mind. And some of these others — he was at the f.a. pause day before yesterday. Get Captain O'Conner on the phone. Hurry."

Nancy hurried from the room to her desk outside. A moment later she had the connection.

"O'Conner?" Hugo Bard said. "This is Dr. Bard. Look — I know you can't stick your neck out. I'm not supposed to either, but I've been going over my file on Green again, and I'm prepared to sign a warrant for him as a dangerous potential criminal. It's a gamble, and I'll have to pay for it with the A.M.A. If he wants to carry it to them."

"Any idea whom he might kill, doctor?"

"None. If I had him here I could soon find out with a special association list. It's more than possible that it's happened already, in the past three days. Get the warrant ready. I'll be down by six thirty to sign it. My word on that. If my word is good enough, start searching for him right away."

He flicked the phone bar. "Nancy, send in the inpenated mind. What I won't go through for twenty-five dollars!" He heard Nancy's pleasant, "You may go in now, Mrs. Garson." He hung up, grinning.

At 6:05 he was rid of Mrs. Garson. At 6:25 he sign the warrant in the office of O'Conner who had waited personally for him, to meet him. O'Conner was quite interested in the case now. He had men on the case already. David Green was not home, nor could he be located. Green had a rich uncle, a girl friend, a service station and garage which he owned but didn't run himself. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

police were making headway.

From 6:35 to 6:38 Hugo Bard talked to his wife on the phone after having given his dinner order to a waiter in a quiet restaurant. He relaxed utterly during dinner, reading the newspaper, glancing at the people about him, savoring his food consciously at times in order to get his stomach interested.

At 7:22 while he was on dessert a man and woman descended on him. He glanced up, not recognizing them. Then he did. "Why Mrs. Gorham — Gertrude! Is this your husband?"

"I certainly am," the man said. "I've always hoped I would meet you so I could thank you for —"

"Not you," Mrs. Gorham said. "*I* received the psychosurgery, and I appreciate it far more than you can, Paul."

Hugo grinned. "Won't you join me? I'm about ready to leave, but I'll have another coffee with you. Always glad to see the results of my work. It gives me the will to keep on." His memory was filling in for him. Mrs. Gorham had been highly paranoiac — as are thirty percent of women who have been married a few years — only more toward the distinct psychopathic level, making life a living hell for everyone about her. Eventually she might have shot her husband for dropping ashes on the rug or something just as monumental. He realized with a start of surprise why he hadn't remembered her. She had been the big bosomed bloated belly type. Now she was well proportioned, graceful and graceous. Not being too interested in the physiological after-effects of psychocatharsis and surgery, it always surprised him to realize once again that a balanced mind produces a balanced body.

At 7:40 he took leave of the Gorhams. At 7:58 he checked in at the Psychosurgery Annex. He instructed the girl to tell the police where he was. From 8:10 to 8:50, accompanied by the three internes, he made the rounds of his hospitalized patients.

At 8:52 he stopped in front of the observation window to Mary Davis's room. And the p.a. speaker started saying, "Calling Dr. Bard. Calling Dr. Bard."

He went to the nearest local phone. "Dr. Bard talking. What is it?"

"Police Captain O'Conner is on the phone, Dr. Bard." And, a second later, "Dr. Bard? O'Conner. Remember my mentioning the rich uncle? Mr. Philo Green. Lived in a fortieth floor suite at the Waldorf. He leaped or was thrown from a window ten minutes ago. I'm there now. He left a suicide note. We still haven't located David Green. This is going to be damned embarrassing to you if the suicide is genuine. Want me to forget the warrant? Offi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cially, that is. When we get David . . ."

"Use your own judgment, O'Conner. I'm three minutes away from surgery here at the hospital. I can't be reached for the next four hours. If you want me tonight you can get me here at exactly one a.m. Goodbye."

He dropped the phone and returned to the observation window. Inside, Mary Davis lay still, entirely naked except for numerous electrodes attached by tape to her body, a pneumatometer over her mouth and nose — utterly transparent so that her features weren't hidden, and other measuring instruments. Above her, bright red dots on the tri-di video camera indicated it to be alive and watching.

Beside Mary Davis inside the room, an interne and two nurses stood, each wearing headphones and soundproof mike masks, the cords spiraling from their heads toward the ceiling.

Hugo Bard sat down at the control panel. Directly in front of him a tri-di screen brought a realistic color image of Mary's head. Around the screen sensitive pointers in meters were delicately alive.

He absently placed earphones over his head, and at once he could hear the deep slow breathing of the patient.

"Hello, Mary," he said dreamily. "This is Hugo. Remember me."

As though echoing from an infinite distance, her voice replied. "Hello, Hugo."

And thus, simply, psychosurgery had begun. For John Newland, the freshman interne viewing it for the first time, it was at least hair raising. Infant squalling, baby talk, little girl talk, coming from the throat of a grown woman — to be interrupted often by what seemed a separate entity residing in the same body, an emotionless lost-soul voice from beyond heaven or hell, speaking from within the chest, describing, answering Dr. Bard's questions, obeying his commands.

Mary had been born with the juices of her mother's intense fear of immanent death still soaking her. She had sucked in her first breath untended, while the doctor and nurses concentrated on her mother. It had begun then, a gestalt at the cornerstone of Mind before the id identified itself with toe and thumb and mouth, before consciousness integrated the concept of *I* and *possessed* all the mental cosmos it could accept emotionally, fleeing from all else — and thus casting itself psychotically free of what should have been its solid rock of security.

Is a bottle half full or half empty? To Mary, her mother was always leaving her — to the terrors of being alone. Her father

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was always leaving her — or not there. They never came. They were never there. They were leaving, or not there. Things fled, or were about to flee.

It was, of course, just one tributary of the river of Mind, isolated by drug-fixed morbidity and artificially induced depression which walled off the happier moments, the gay hopes — often fulfilled. But it was real, and the bil of its spring waters polluted the broad currents of the adult stream of consciousness. So much so, in fact, that Mary's libido, that vast unconscious stream of directed and undirected many-layered motivations and drives of which the conscious mind is almost the complete tool — or victim, in this case — was obsessed with murder, self destruction, general destruction, and revenge against everything. And held in check only by an intense fear of being *alone*.

Even to Dr. Hugo Bard it was a nightmare, listening to the disembodied chest-voice of the unconscious woman, the voice of her *monitor* (conscience, superconscious ego, etc.) as it patiently portrayed the progression of the gestaltic stairway from the subdepths of pre-birth to the present.

The rundown was completed at midnight. Immediately Dr. Bard returned Mary to the moment of birth, before she had taken her first breath. Here was the point where the first Lie must be firmly implanted.

Special drugs to disorient her entire motor nerve network had to take effect. Antidote for the temperature depressant was included in the mixture. A drug (first isolated in 2005 A.D., which, when injected in laboratory rats caused them to go berserk with fear) was injected directly into the aorta. Suggestion paralyzed the diaphragm. Complete physiological recapitulation of the post-birth sequence of events was created, with split-second timing. The bed on which Mary lay was upended in one violent jerk. An electric hammer built into the bed gave her behind a brutal spank. And a tape recording produced the sound effects of a loving, heartlessly cruel Father and Protector, as fear-antidote, and *aside* hypnotic direction implanted the new — the *secure* — transfer from the womb to independent existence.

At 1:00 A.M. Mary was "less than an hour old" and Hugo Bard was more weary than he had ever been in his life, he thought. He left her that way, with a nurse crooning softly in her ears and speaking to her as a loving mother speaks to her newborn child. It was a psychosurgical Lie, but it would anchor a floating mind to a secure bedrock of sane balance.

And it was only the beginning.

"Calling Dr. Bard. Calling Dr.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bard . . . ." the p.a. speaker said in a pleasant feminine voice. Hugo wiped his sleeve across his forehead and went to the hall phone. "This is Dr. Bard," he said quietly.

A moment later a familiar voice sounded. "This is O'Conner, doctor. I stayed up to give you a report. We picked up David Green and booked him on an open charge. It doesn't look like we can make a murder charge stick, though. We've been trying to crack the case open, but the suicide note stymies us. It's Philo Green's handwriting, all right. Everything about the case spells suicide. We're working on David to break down his alibi. I personally think it's murder, now. One of the cleverest murders I've run across. Want to come down and talk to David?"

Hugo glanced at his watch. It was 1:03. "Could you take him to my office?" he said. "We can clear this whole thing up there."

"It's irregular, but — okay."

"Be there in half an hour," Hugo said wearily, and hung up.

He showered and had a brief rub down in Physiotherapy, drank a cup of hot coffee gratefully that a student nurse had waiting for him, conscious of her worshipful eyes on him, knowing the cause of that worship, knowing that he was worthy of it. Egoboost, but well earned. From 1:26 to 1:27 he was on the elevator descending to the basement garage, thinking briefly of his wife, wondering if she was asleep, wanting to call her but knowing he wouldn't.

At 1:36 he parked at the curb in front of his offices, behind a darkened police car. "Hello, O'Conner. Hello David," he said, shaking hands. He led the procession to the entrance door and unlocked it, turning on lights as he went through to his office. He switched on the polyanalyzer so it could warm up.

Without looking at David Green he said, "You know, don't you, David, that I'm going to find out whether you killed your uncle. The evidence won't be accepted in court, but once these men know for sure that you did, they'll break you down, destroy your alibi. They're strictly twentieth century."

"Aren't you violating professional ethics in this business?" David Green asked, his voice careful.

"Perhaps. Strip—" Dr. Bard was interrupted by a fit of coughing from David Green. "Your flu bothering you, David? Strip to your shorts. I'm going to use the electrodes and get a complete physiological reaction chart." To O'Conner and his men, "You ever see a polyanalyzer work? It's the psychodiagnostician's main tool. Not perfect, but it's being improved all the time. I myself am working on an idea which will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make it more perfect — eliminate more of the guesswork."

"We have our lie box," O'Conner said. "Not as elaborate, of course, and too many people can beat the lie box."

David Green had undressed. "Lie down on the couch, David," Dr. Bard said. When David Green complied, he started taping paste smeared electrodes to his skin. "Even so," he said absently, "the polyanalyzer is crude compared to what we have for mental surgery. It's just an office instrument — a probe. You're perspiring rather freely, David." He touched a control on the polyanalyzer. A pointer in a sensitive meter jumped away from zero. "Hmm. You're running a slight temperature." Other meters came to life. "Did you kill your uncle, David?"

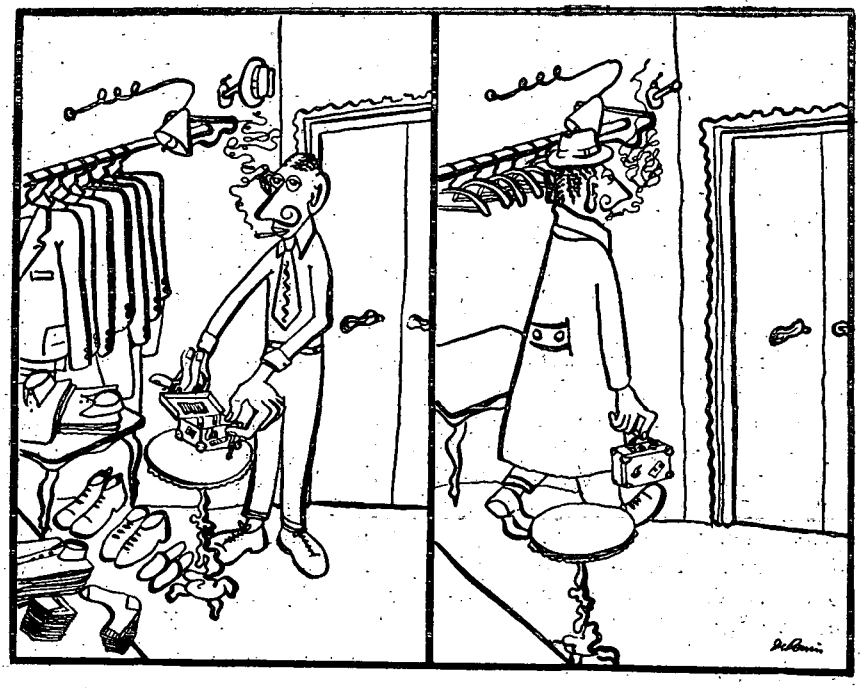
"No."

O'Conner said, "God! Look at those needles jump all over the dial! He's lying sure as shooting."

"That could mean — something else," Dr. Bard said quietly. "Where were you when your uncle fell from the window, David?"

"I was at a show."

Dr. Bard's eyes studied the variations of the instruments. "I'm sorry, David," he said regretfully. "You're lying. Did you



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

murder your uncle? Answer me."

"No." The instruments moved wildly.

Hugo Bard went to a filing cabinet and came back with a tape spool. "I'm going to run a word-association, David," he said.

Eyes watched in fascination as he inserted the spool. The poly-analyzer spoke a word. David answered. Again. It went on and on. Finally Dr. Bard shut off the machine. Its lights dimmed. The needles drifted down to their zero pegs. The doctor seemed lost in thought, while O'Conner and his men watched him with wide eyes, waiting.

"Did he do it?" O'Conner finally said, breaking the silence.

"In a sense," Dr. Bard said quietly. "Not in the legal sense. His uncle actually committed suicide. That's true, isn't it David?"

"Yes." It was subdued.

Dr. Bard sighed. "What really happened was that you knew he was going to. That's what filled your thoughts lately with death. You were sandwiched between your uncle and the possibility that I might find out what was going on. I'll let it go at that — provided you agree to enter the hospital for surgery. We'll make that a week from now. After the funeral."

O'Conner's voice was edged with anger. "You mean he didn't do it? We've gone through all this for nothing?"

"I wouldn't say that," Hugo Bard said. "If you could have picked up David right away I could have learned what was going on, and you could have prevented the suicide. It was, in a very real sense, murder. But you can't convict a man of murder just by proving he knew suicide was immanent — and wanted it to happen." Hugo sighed. "Think about it. I might feel I need the help of your department again. I hope I will get it. Some day —" He stopped talking, smiled tiredly. As a specialist he had dreams of megalomania about his profession. Dreams in which even the police department was a minor subdivision instrument of mass psychosurgery, creating a perfect world of balanced, healthy minds.

"Call on me any time," O'Conner said gruffly. "Maybe I might use you sometime. First time I've ever seen much of this stuff. Put your clothes on, Green. We have to take you with us. You'll be released in the morning. But do what the doctor says — or we'll keep an eye on you."

After a while they were gone. Hugo went to the back room and bathed his face in cold water. He came back and cleared the poly-analyzer, and filed the tapes.

He glanced at his watch before turning off the lights. It was 2:53.

He wondered if his wife was asleep. He sighed.

She led a rough life.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Illustrator: L. R. Summers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAN WITH THE FINE MIND

By KRIS NEVILLE

Recently newspapers have told of an unusual number of murders without motive. A teen-age girl is shot to death by a total stranger. A young man runs amok, butchering a dozen or more innocent bystanders. An expectant mother is blasted down on a busy street by a man she's never seen before. The police come and take the killer away and the men in the white coats rap his knees with rubber hammers and mutter something about "schizophrenia" and lock him up in a padded cell, and that's the last you hear of it.

Kris Neville, whose story, The Opal Necklace, in the first issue of FANTASTIC, *drew a great deal of praise, again takes you through the mystic mazes of the human mind, showing with amazing insight what goes on in the mind of a madman moments before his last hold on reason disappears.*

THIS being only the first drink, he was still tense and ill at ease, and the room and the people were still sharply in focus. He had no desire to scream at the discreet group of husbands surrounding Malvernen — an odd name for a woman, he thought detachedly — and call them the idiots they were. He had no desire to collar the first person that passed and cry: "Why don't you let me alone!" He had no intention of cussing out the hostess for inviting him. Things like that had not yet occurred to him.

The colors were unusually bright, and his ears picked up scraps of conversation even as he listened to Malvernen.

One would imagine, he thought, if one did not know her, that she

Copyright 1953 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co.
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was not flirting with the husbands, each in turn. That the smile was distant and impersonal and the attentive way she listened was merely polite.

Malvernen, talking now, had dreamed, she said, that it was necessary to prove she owned a butcher knife before she was permitted to buy groceries in the super market.

Looking at her sprawled over the purple chair, her white legs draped over the arm rest, some of the lower thigh of the right one, fringed by the green lace of her slip, showing seductively, he thought of frog legs on a wine-stained platter garnished with parsley. And thinking of frog legs, he thought especially of the way they kicked and quivered in the frying pan and seemed to quiver in the throat as they were being swallowed.

He rolled the warming brandy in the glass. He wanted to interrupt her monologue and explain the meaning of the dream, so that she might better understand herself and so that the company would realize the depth of his own insight and turn to listen to him as they were not listening to her.

It would, he thought, be pleasant to snub them then: to fade away, withdraw, ignore them, leave them to their own drab worlds, forever excluded from his own radiance.

He formed the sentences in his mind: It is because you are not married (he fancied himself saying as he leaned toward her) that you have such a dream. You see, the knife is the dream symbol for the male. . . .

At least, he thought, in her case. In such matters it is essential to consider the background of the subject. The knife, to someone else, might indicate a deep-seated complex, might represent a menace to his own masculinity. . . .

Without (he continued his fancied conversation) the husband which the knife represents, which I will be, you are unable to obtain the security of a home, represented by your act of purchasing for that home. You think the key to a man's love is through his stomach, you think if you could cook like mother. . .

But he said nothing. The company still listened to Malvernen. He squirmed on the sofa. He wanted to draw them away from her and leave her in a silence of inattention alien to her nature, from which she would burst, venting her wrath and affection upon him, her tormentor.

You came with me, Malvernen, he thought. You should pay some attention to the man you will marry. I'm very smart, I have a fine mind, everyone knows that. I can talk, too.

But he was too sober yet. Later, he would become almost garru-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lous, but by then he would have lost the lucidity of the present moment. Things would begin to blur, and ideas so easily felt would be impossible to put into words; the words would come out all wrong.

He fell to reflecting how fortunate some people were — those who, in their supreme ignorance or peace of mind, were able to recount their dreams to others. There are some people, he thought, who never tell their dreams, who insist they never dream at all, thinking it better to be thought a liar than a monster.

I must not throw glasses tonight, he thought; or cry; nor must I curse again. The hangover will be sufficient punishment.

He chuckled to himself and noticed that one of the husbands turned to look at him suspiciously.

What an idiot! he thought.

They're all neurotic, of course, he thought. Only they have no insight.

Now you take me, he thought, I read quite a bit of psychology.

He drained his brandy glass and felt the fumes go to his brain.

Idly, he speculated that it would be nice to kill Malvernen; it would be most satisfying.

The husbands had drifted away, and Malvernen was alone. "Come over here and talk to me," she invited him.

Of course, there was nothing to do but obey her. But as a small gesture of defiance, he crossed the room first and poured himself another drink.

She has the marvelous ability to make a man feel impotent, he thought. She does this in defense of the hungry emotion she rouses; she has a father fixation complex, a strong one.

She's a clever devil, he thought. The rest of them think she's in love with me; but I'm not fooled. They never see the subtle rejections.

He came and sat down at her feet and looked up into her face.

They were alone in the study. Suddenly, for a moment, he felt very strange and divorced from himself.

"Don't get drunk," she said.

She knows the way to get me drunk is to tell me not to, he thought. She wants me drunk, because when I'm drunk I babble at her endlessly like a child crying in the night to his mother.

I have insight, he thought.

He drank the brandy. "I'll stay sober tonight," he said, already feeling himself a little drunk.

"I wish you didn't have to," she said.

"What did you say?" he said, shaking his head.

"I wish you'd told me, then, before we came. You won't mind if I stay, will you?"

"What are you talking about?" he said angrily.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, you'd better hurry," she said. "I'll tell the hostess that you had to run. Good-bye, dear. Be sure to phone me in the morning. Here, I'll go with you to get your coat."

"What are you talking about? I'm not going anywhere!"

Malvernen stood up and stepped over him. She walked toward the door, talking to him, her eyes on a spot slightly above her left shoulder, where his face might be, were he not sitting at the foot of the chair she had just left.

After a moment, he heard people in the den bidding him good-bye.

Sitting quietly on the floor, he thought of how beautiful the red lampshade was. They've gone crazy, he told himself, I'm sitting here on the floor looking at a beautiful red lampshade and they think they're talking to me in the front room.

"Good-bye," they said. There was laughter, a door opening and closing.

For a moment he could not force his mind to concentrate. I have a strong mind, he told himself. The tests at college proved that. I must keep a grip on it now.

And then he nodded his head and laughed deep in his throat.

It's Malvernen's doing, he thought. She arranged it like this; she must have talked to them and made them agree in advance. It's supposed to make me stop drinking.

Oh, it's very clever, he thought. She's a perfect little actress. You might have thought I really was walking at her side.

He stood up and poured himself a drink. He drank it and poured himself another one.

The party seemed to be moving into the living room. He could hear them leaving the den. He stood alone in the quiet study, smiling at the way parties migrate from room to room. Slowly the colors were beginning to lose some of their brilliance. Only the reds — the reds of the wallpaper, the lampshade, the book jackets, the pillows — were still sharp and clean. The distant conversation was a wordless hum punctuated now and again by laughter. Someone began to play the piano.

Drink in hand, he went to the door of the den. He stood there for a moment. As he started to cross the floor, a couple came in from the living room. They stepped around him as if they were aware of his presence, as if they felt he were there, but they did not look at him.

He stared after them. They stopped to embrace and clung tightly to each other.

They're trying to make it convincing, he thought. To hell with them. He finished the drink quickly and set the glass on an end table.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Drawings: Heinrich Kley

Food . . .

. . . and drink

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smiling sourly, he went into the living room. No one turned to look at him. The colors were dull. The lights were fading. He lit a cigarette. Faces blurred and ran together, and his hands were heavy.

The man at the piano was wearing a red tie.

"Okay," he said. "The joke's over. I'm wise to it."

No one seemed to hear him.

The hostess, smiling sociably, a watered drink in her hand, was listening to Malvernen apologize for her fiancé.

He looked at the ring on her finger and for a moment could not remember giving it to her. I must remember to get it back, he thought. I made a horrible mistake. I must do it when I've been drinking, because otherwise she might talk me out of taking it back — no, it's the other way around, he thought: I must do it when I'm sober.

I don't think it's funny, he thought. She shouldn't have arranged this little game. That's a good excuse to get the ring back.

He shook his head and went to the man at the piano. He bent over and said, "Come on, let's cut out this damned nonsense! I know you can see me! Come on, now!"

The man did not turn or answer.

"God damn it!" he said, reaching out for the man's arm. "Enough is enough, do you hear me!" He took the arm, but his grasp was suddenly nerveless, and he could not even shake the arm. His hand lay upon it, feather light and powerless.

He stepped back, and one of the slightly drunk guests detoured around him without looking directly at him.

"He's getting to be a terrible drunk," the hostess said. "I hate to ask him to parties any more. No telling what he's liable to do. Over at the Johnsons' last week, he —"

He strained to listen, realizing that she was talking about him.

"I know," Malvernen said. "It's only been the last couple of months. He's been worried lately. But I can handle him when he gets drunk. He's like a baby."

He moved toward her. "God damn you," he said.

"He's had so much on his mind. His mother dying — he blames himself for not being there — he'll get over it. I'll stick by him."

"He frightens me," the hostess said. "The look in his eyes, sometimes, when he's been drinking."

"He's fine when he's sober," Malvernen said.

"Yes, when he's sober."

"He does those things he does when he gets drunk because he feels guilty — he wants us to punish him, to ostracize him, I think — I don't know. He needs sympathy."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sly, very sly, he thought. Malvernen knows I'm still here, she knows I'm listening.

I'll ignore her, he thought, that will be most effective.

He went to the bar and poured himself a drink. He drank it. He waved the bottle at a thin, mousey-looking girl. "You see this!" he cried. "See this, damn you!"

She stared through him, a blank expression on her face. She sipped her drink.

He put the bottle down. His hands were shaking. He closed his eyes tightly and shook his head. His hands began to feel lighter, floating, powerful.

He held his hands above his head. "Listen!" he cried. The piano player changed melodies. "I know what you sons of bitches are trying to do!" he cried.

Over in the corner, three people began laughing at a joke.

"Listen!" he pleaded. "Please listen to me!"

"Would you hand me a cigarette?" the mousey little girl asked a man in a T-shirt.

He stood still, panting. There was perspiration in his palms and on his forehead. He hunched forward. "I'll show you!" he snarled. "I'll show you! I'll get drunk anyway, damn you!"

He fumbled for the bottle. He drank out of it. The room swam before his eyes when he set it down. He lurched back against a table.

He wrinkled his forehead, focusing his eyes. Slowly the room was getting fuzzy at the edges. Things moved like disembodied spirits in the outer darkness.

I'll show them, he thought. I'll make them notice me.

He staggered across the room. He propped himself up against the doorway. He stumbled down a dark hallway.

He rested against the stove in the kitchen. Moonlight came into the room from the east window and fell across the linoleum; everything was drab and colorless.

He fumbled at the handle of the butcher knife in the knife rack.

He carried the butcher knife into the living room. His feet were getting heavy now, but his hands were light.

He weaved across the room to the hostess. He waved the butcher knife in front of her face. She did not notice it.

"I could cut your throat!" he said.

The hostess moved leisurely toward a tight group of men who were examining one of the books on the lamp table.

He got a bottle and went to the corner and sat down and began to cry. After three drinks, his mind began to clear. The room was still blurred, but if he closed his eyes and leaned back, he could think

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a quite satisfactory manner.

They don't see me, he thought.

It's Malvernen's fault, he thought.

They don't see me!

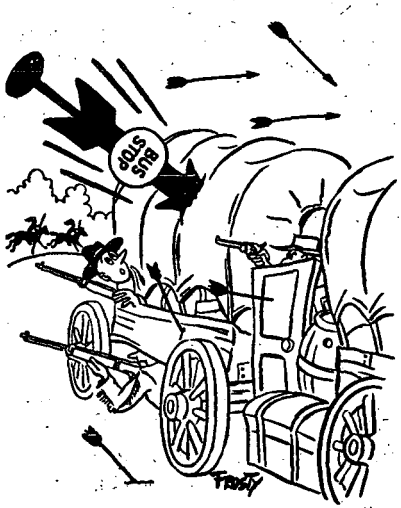
I have a very powerful mind, he thought. I could walk through walls if I only had the energy when I got drunk enough.

I'm asleep, I'm dreaming. Alcohol induces dreams. People move very slowly to the fox trot music from a piano with a red tie.

I have a powerful desire for the negation of my masculinity, he thought, pleased with the neatness of the sentence.

He repeated it aloud.

"You see," he explained, although no one listened to him, "I created an hallucination with my mind that walked out of the room, that you all said good-bye to, thinking all the time it was me."



He sat in the corner for what seemed a long time, petting the butcher knife, his eyes closed. Finally he heard Malvernen say, "I really have to go."

Her voice cut clearly across the rest of the conversation.

He opened his eyes and frowned. Maybe I've been listening for that, he thought. It would be nice to kill her, he thought. I've thought about it for a long time — for months.

Knowledge is power, he thought. I'm reasoning very clearly. The room is full of fog, but I can see what I want to see. I can see Malvernen. She is wearing a red tie. I understand myself.

I would have married her eventually, he thought. She would have got me drunk and trapped me. She has rejected me, but she would marry me for spite.

Mother, he thought, wouldn't like it, not at all. Poor mother fell and broke both legs, which interfered with her heart and killed her. I shouldn't have left the toy on the steps, but I'll make it up to her.

He smiled. My, I'm drunk, he thought, to be able to think so clearly. He sat in the corner of the room, petting his butcher knife.

I am so insignificant, he thought, that they can't even see me. When I am done, I will leave, and they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will never even notice me at all.

He laughed aloud. I'm too smart for it, he thought. "I'm too smart for it," he said. "It's lying down there at the sleeping level of my mind, and I know it's there, and I can use it."

"I really must," Malvernen said. "No, thank you, Jack. After all, I'm engaged. I'll just call a cab."

He crept to his feet, clutching the butcher knife. "Wait!" he cried. "Malvernen, wait!" He brandished the butcher knife. "I want to kill you! Don't go away!"

He staggered after her, laughing.

She went into the bedroom after her coat, and he followed her, lurching and stumbling.

"I'm going to kill you, do you hear!"

No one turned to watch.

When he finished what he had to do, he swayed unsteadily.

I have done a bad thing, he thought. I will probably regret it when I sober up in the morning. I'll have a horrible hangover.

He picked up his coat from the bed. It had been lying beside Malvernen's. He put it on. I will leave now, and they won't even see me, he thought, chuckling drunkenly.

He put the butcher knife in his pocket.

At the doorway he stopped, trying to focus his eyes.

The hostess turned around, smiling. He could scarcely see her face. The smile merged and flowed away. "What are you doing back?" she said into an echo chamber. "I thought you left —"

She stopped talking.

Little by little the room fell silent as the guests all turned, horrified, to stare at him.

He looked down at his brightly colored hands and began to whimper.

SCIENCE is nothing but perception.
— Plato

WHEN you wish upon a star, don't get impatient if it seems a little slow to react. The nearest star to the Earth is 25,000,000,000,000 miles away.

IT seems that not all the atmospherical disturbances around Washington D. C. are caused by the hot air of the politicos after all. In 1908 a meteorite which weighed 40,000 tons crashed into a Siberian forest, and stirred up air waves that reached as far as our nation's capital.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ANT WITH THE HUMAN SOUL

BOB OLSEN

Illustrated by MOREY

Continuing—and concluding—one of the best short novels ever to run in the early issues of Amazing Stories Quarterly *back in the days when magazine science fiction was still young, chock-full of wonder, and loaded with sound but speculative science. With the light-hearted touch that delighted his many fans—especially in the "Four-Dimensional" stories—Bob Olsen now shows us what finally happened to the young student who tried suicide only to end up as an awed "observer" tucked away in a tiny corner of a farmer ant's brain.*

SYNOPSIS

Despondent over the lack of direction in his life, KENNETH WILLIAMS tries solving his problems via the waters of San Diego Bay.

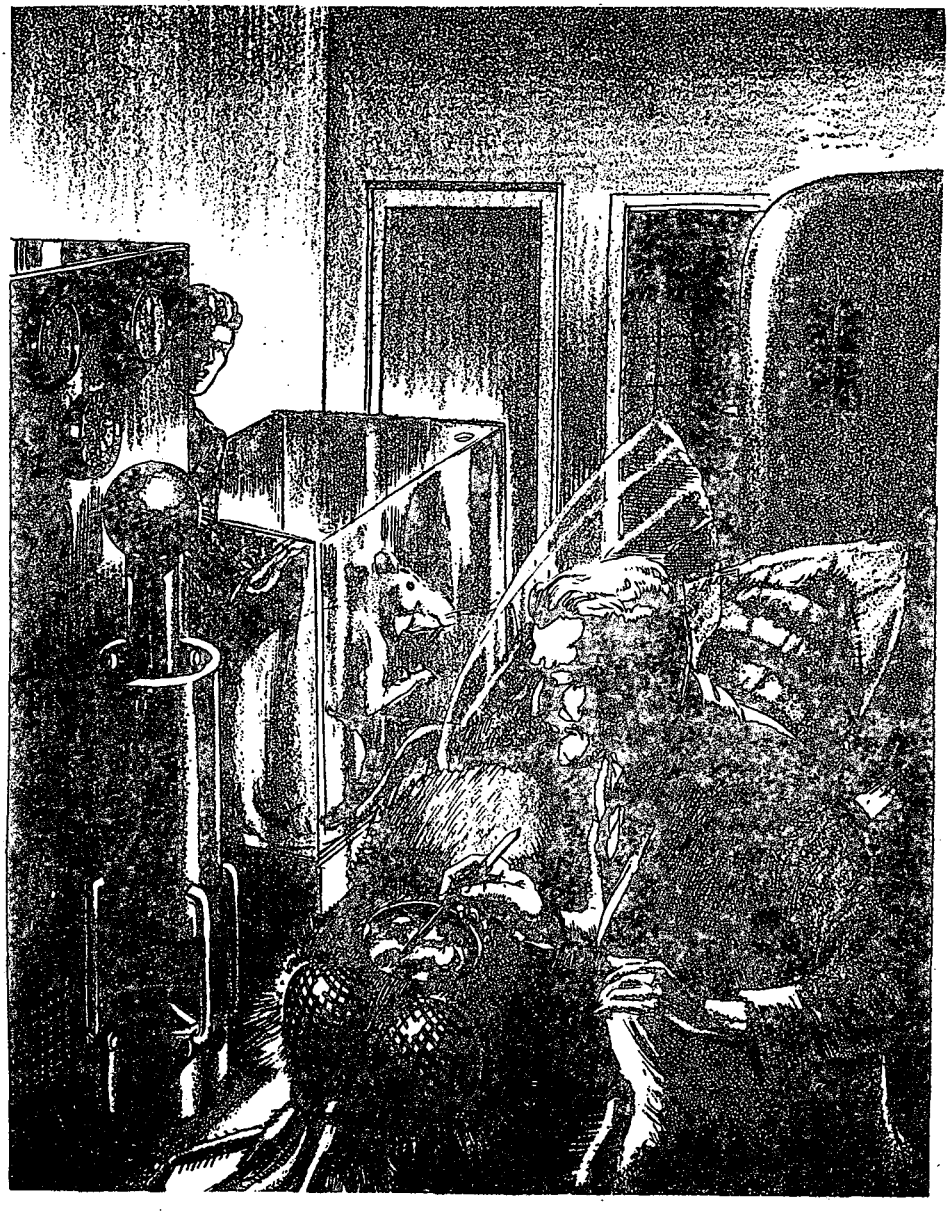
Instead of drowning he recovers from his suicide attempt under the ministration of DR. DE VILLA, who gives him a sedative and leaves before Ken can satisfy his curiosity as to why his life has been interefered with. To his further annoyance he discovers, before the soporific works, that there is no apparent exit from the room.

When he wakes the next morning he finds that what seemed a clothes closet is in reality a small elevator. It deposits him in a laboratory operating room, where Dr. De Villa is working on the exposed encephalon of a huge bee. When Ken finds the lab exit locked, he struggles with De Villa, and in the confusion the unattended bee gets free, crushing Ken to the floor. Once more De Villa comes to the rescue and with Ken's aid subdues the insect.

Later they retire to De Villa's quarters where he explains his bizarre experiments. De Villa can expand and contract matter through the use of a chemical called Spacite *and a machine he calls the* Volumalter. *These de-*

Copyright 1932 by Teck Publications, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vices have enabled him to transfer that part of the nervous system containing an insect's memory cells from one specimen to another. Ken is amazed by the scientist's methods and is horrified when De Villa offers him $10,000 to take part in his experiments. However, De Villa is persuasive and Ken finally gives in to his arguments, not the least of which is that the experience may prove a cure for his suicidal tendencies.

The plan is to transfer that part of Ken's brain containing his memory into the expanded encephalon of an ant. Then De Villa will return the insect to its original size. If things go well, Ken's memory will then be restored to his own brain, and they will have gained "first hand" information about ant life. A white hair tied around his "host's" body will identify it, and when De Villa wishes to communicate he will signal via the vibration of a riveting hammer. Although he still has some misgivings (some of which concern his ex-girl, Alice Hill), Ken permits the experiment to proceed.

The operation is completed smoothly and when Ken recovers from the anesthesia he has become a "guest" in a leaf-cutting ant's "mind." At first he has some difficulty adjusting, but De Villa has provided his host with a crop filled with honey which can be regurgitated and fed to other ants as an act of good will. Ken finds this "social custom" pleasurable and useful. With it he "bribes" his way past suspicious ant "gatekeepers" and into the nest.

Once inside he is guided through the darkness by "mind-pictures" of his surroundings formed by his host's super sense of smell. Exploring one tunnel after another he discovers he's a member of a colony of farmer ants who tend underground fungus gardens for food.

Completing his "farm" chores he comes upon the formicary where the ants maintain the temperature of their eggs by moving them deeper as the ground warms and then back to the surface as the sun goes down. Later his ant co-workers "introduce" him to the Queen. Cleaning the huge body and feeding it occupy a good part of each ant's daily duty.

As the day ends Ken realizes he's been a farmer, nursemaid, porter and caterer, and has enjoyed each task in a way he has never before known.

However, the idyll is not to last, for, that very night he will witness some of the most horrible acts of criminal violence ever "sensed" by "human eyes!"

Conclusion

I have already described two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

types of parasites who infested our ant city, namely, the loafers of our own species and the alien "Hoboes" who sneaked their sustenance from their good-natured hosts. Aside from the fact that they took toll from the common food supply without contributing anything by their own efforts, these two varieties of pests were harmless.

But that night I learned that the very walls of our homes were infested by thousands of other parasties who were so utterly vicious and unprincipled that they could easily qualify as the most perfidious scoundrels of Antdom. Strange to say, these unspeakable villains were also ants. They illustrated the well-known truth that the most dangerous enemies of ants are other ants—just as the worst enemies of men are other men.

I learned later that myrmecologists—those scientists who specialize in the study of ants—call these little criminals "Thieving Ants." I am sure that these same scientists would have used a much stronger term to designate a band of men who behaved in a similar manner. Suppose you try to put yourself in the position of the ants who owned this dwelling place. Imagine that the walls of your house are honeycombed with tunnels inhabited by a ferocious band of men who are so tiny that you cannot get at them without destroying your home.

These Wall-Dwellers never come out when the family is up and stirring; but in the dead of night, when everything is quiet, they steal out of their hiding places in large numbers. If your wife or your children's nursemaid happens to get in their way they attack her viciously, stabbing her to death with poisoned daggers. Then they rush to the room where your babies are sleeping, drag them from their beds, tear them to pieces and devour them.

That's exactly what those so-called "Thieving Ants" did in the home of the peaceful, kind-hearted Leaf Bearing ants.

With the aid of my newly discovered faculty for constructing "smell images," I witnessed a raid made by a band of these nefarious baby-killers. Pouring out of a tiny crevasse in the wall of a passageway they rushed for the room where the larvae were kept. On the way they passed several of the larger ants who didn't seem to notice the presence of the marauders—probably because they were so small and smelled exactly like the rightful owners of the formicary. I followed them at a distance and saw them enter the nursery. There were two nurses on guard, but the midget assassins attacked them without hesitation. It was like a bunch of rats attacking an elephant, but the odds seemed to be over-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whelmingly in favor of the rats. They made free use of their poisoned stings, which were located at the ends of their gasters. Within a few seconds, the two brave defenders were lying on the floor of the chamber, writhing in agony.

I was going to attack the murderers myself, but held off, excusing my cowardice with the thought that under circumstances like this, discretion is the better part of valor. I did the next best thing and ran for help. In some mysterious manner I managed to convey to the first ant I met that our young ones were in danger. Instantly she began to butt her head against the wall of the nest, producing a vibration that must have been perceptible for some distance. In response to her signal, hundreds of ants, including many of the enormous soldiers, came running to our aid.

When we reached the scene of the crime, we found the two nurses dead. Each of the raiders had grabbed a larva and had tried to run off with it. We made short work of those which had lagged behind, but many of them succeeded in darting through the tiny openings of their nest which were so small that we larger ants could not follow them.

I realized then that even among these hard-working, peace-loving farmers, the life of an ant was a constant battle.

By the time the last of the assassins had disappeared, I was so fagged out that I gladly joined a group of my companions who had crawled into a sleeping chamber and had lain down to rest.

On the following morning our first duty was to straighten out the disorder which had been caused by the raid of the Gangster Ants. There were several dead bodies to dispose of. Those of the marauders were carried outside and were unceremoniously dumped at some distance from the nest. But we treated the remains of our friends with more care and reverence. I am not going to say definitely that the ants went through with a funeral ceremony. Let me just describe what happened and you can form your own conclusions.

Lying in the chamber were a few empty cocoon cases, which had recently been abandoned by their maturing tenants. Some of the ants cut slits in two of the cocoons and then carefully placed the bodies of the martyred nurses inside these improvised caskets. Followed by a solemn procession they then carried the coffined bodies of their friends outside the nest and deposited them on a heap of refuse. Tenderly and sorrowfully, the ants covered the biers with particles of dirt. I could almost swear that I saw tears in the eyes of the mourners as they slowly filed back to the nest.

In addition to acting as undertakers, we had to do a lot of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

housecleaning. Every particle of refuse or useless matter was picked up and carried out of the nest.

Once, when I was on my way back to the nest after doing a bit of scavenger work, I came upon a remarkable sight. A solitary ant was tugging away at a huge grasshopper leg, which apparently had become amputated during a struggle with some other creature. She was a small ant, but she made up in perseverence what she lacked in size. As she strained at the enormous object, she reminded me of a man trying to drag the body of a full-grown elephant for several miles through a dense forest. Considering the comparative size of herself and her burden, that analogy seemed to fit the task she had selected.

Despite the Herculean character of her job, she seemed to be making some progress, though it was, of course, very slow. She exerted herself terrifically as she grasped one end of the burden in her mandibles, braced her six legs and pulled the object toward her. Scores of other ants passed close by, but none of them offered to help her. When I came near to her I discovered that she was the same ant which had first greeted me and had subsequently introduced me to the queen. Then and there I dubbed her "Diana," because of her hunting skill.

I hastened to her and, taking a firm hold on the grasshopper leg, helped her to drag it along the ground. As soon as she perceived what I was doing, she let go of the burden and came to me, thanking me with caresses of her antennae and at the same time demanding a droplet of food from my crop. I gladly satisfied her hunger and after a short rest, we tackled the job again, dragging the choice provender right to the opening of the nest.

Here the huge gatekeepers rushed out to welcome us. After the customary greetings with the antennae and the inevitable regurgitations with which every important event was celebrated, the doorkeepers treated us with the greatest solicitude. While two of them relieved us of our burden, the others surrounded us, brushing the dust from our bodies, licking and caressing us with the tenderest care. They they led us inside the nest to a special resting chamber which evidently was reserved for exhausted travelers.

Since I had dragged the load but a short distance, I was not at all tired, but Diana must have been terribly fatigued by her strenuous labors. No sooner had the doorkeepers left us than she fell into a sound slumber. By way of experiment I touched her gently to see if she would awaken easily, but she did not stir. Then I gave her a rough nudge. Still she slept. Even when I rolled her body over and over, she didn't seem to be at all conscious of what was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

going on but slumbered through it all.

Since I did not feel like wasting any of my precious time in a mid-day siesta, I left the dormitory and went to take a look at the fungus garden which we had planted the day before. Knowing how fast mushrooms germinate, I expected to find some evidence of growth, but I was totally unprepared for the remarkable picture which my sense of smell brought to me.

The bed of compost was completely covered with a tangled mass of fungus filaments. Swarming over them were scores of ants, frantically engaged in nibbling off the tips of the stalks, which seemed to grow faster than they could be pruned. In some parts of the bed, tiny capsules had already begun to form. (I learned later that these particular cryptograms are called Rhozites Gonglylophora and that the capsules are known as "Kohlrabis.")

Observing that my nestmates were having a hard job keeping pace with the rapid growth of the mushrooms, I pitched in and helped as well as I could. It was an exciting battle. There were several times when it looked as if the vegetables were going to win. They were growing so fast that they almost filled the entire chamber and we were all in danger of being trapped and smothered. Just when it looked as if we would have to give up and run for our lives, a band of reinforcements arrived on the scene and we got the fungus garden under control.

Just how long I remained in the nest of Mushroom Growers I had no idea at the time. So engrossed had I become in my new life that I almost forgot that I had ever been anything else but an ant. The thought of signalling to Doctor De Villa and of returning to my human body did not enter my mind. I made no attempt to keep track of the time, although I was cognizant of the fact that several nights had passed.

Then one day I became the victim of a frightful accident. Strange to say, it was brought on by the very thing that was designed to rescue me. I happened to be inside the nest, working in one of the side passageways. Suddenly the ground began to tremble with terrific force. To me it seemed a lot worse than a real earthquake, and I ought to know what I am talking about because I was in the big 'quake at Santa Barbara, when many of the largest business buildings were totally destroyed.

The force of the temblor threw me over on my side and, just as I fell, a section of the roof came tumbling down on top of me. Several of the other ants were partly buried by falling dirt, but most of them managed to dig themselves out. In vain I tried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to extricate myself. If the material on top of me had been all loose earth, I could easily have done this, but it happened that a pebble at least three times as large as my body was resting on top of the heap. I was not in pain, but the weight of the miniature boulder was so great that I couldn't move my legs. I perceived another ant coming toward me, and my hope of rescue seemed certain. When I recognized the odor of the new arrival, I was not nearly so optimistic.

It was Lazy Mary. Instead of starting to dig me out, she crawled on top of the pebble, adding her weight to the heavy load already pressing down on me. She thrust her head close to mine, looking at me dumbly as if she could not understand why I was there. I managed to touch her head with my antennae. As eloquently as possible, I asked her to help me. "Come on, Mary," I tried to say. "Be a good sport and get me out of this mess, will you, old girl?"

She seemed to understand my predicament all right, but still she made no attempt to extricate me. Instead she stood above me, looking down at me in the most insolent manner. I felt sure that she was saying something like this: "So it is you, is it? You're the one that tried to make me work. Now you are in a fine fix, aren't you? Serves you right. That's what you get for butting into other folks' business. Think I'm going to bother about helping you? Nothing doing, old kid."

In the meantime, pandemonium reigned in the nest. For a while the workers rushed about in panic-stricken excitement. Then in some mysterious way a concerted plan was transmitted to them. They began to move in a systematic, orderly manner. I noticed that most of them were carrying eggs or larvae in their mandibles and all of them were moving toward the exit. Then the significance of their actions dawned on me. Because of the disturbance, the order had gone out to move the nest. Within a short time our formicary would be deserted, and I would be left to my fate.

In vain I tried to attract the attention of some of the other workers. They were all so engrossed with their tasks, so excited in the general exodus, that they had no time for me. Finally Lazy Mary, dumb as she seemed to be, caught the fever. She climbed down from the boulder, walked up to an unburdened ant and calmly attached herself to the underside of the other's head. In this way she was carried bodily out of the nest. She was even too lazy to walk to her new home!

With Lazy Mary's departure all hope abandoned me. Useless as she turned out to be, her sisterly companionship had given me some comfort, since there was at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

least a remote chance that I could coax her to liberate me. But with her gone and all the other ants frantically absorbed in the engrossing job of vacating the nest, there was no possibility that I would be rescued.

At that moment the horrible events which I had witnessed that first night after my arrival popped into my mind. I suddenly recalled that the walls around me were swarming with murderous criminals who were only waiting for nightfall to come swarming out and to torture me with their poisoned stings. It was not a very pleasant fate to look forward to, I can assure you of that.

I began to wonder how long Doctor De Villa would wait for me. If he had been watching, he must have noticed the general exodus. How would he interpret my failure to obey his summons? Would he guess that I was confined in the formicary and start digging for me? If so, what chance was there he would reach my cavern, or that he would be able to see my tiny head sticking out from a mount of earth?

Thus I worred as my wonderful sense of smell told me that the last ant had departed carrying the last baby with it and leaving me alone in the deserted nest. I found out, however, that I was not altogether alone. From some distant passageway I detected a powerful aroma which told me that one of the Ant Hoboes was still in the nest. Then another odor came to my nostrils—a familiar one and a very welcome one.

It was Diana—brave, dutiful Diana—who had noticed the absence of one of our worthless guests and, like the good Christian she was, had returned to the nest for it. Soon I smelled her approaching me. She was carrying the Hobo in her mandibles. I struggled with all my might, beating the air with my antennae and striving to attract her attention. I had no way of making any sound and even if I had it would have done no good, since we ants were all deaf. Fortunately, however, Diana noticed that my antennae were moving and she came over to investigate. When she discovered my predicament, she set down the bug and tried to pull the pebble away from my body.

Her efforts would have done credit to Samson himself, but the pebble was too much for her. She didn't give up, however, but began to dig away the dirt under one side of the tiny stone. When she had undermined it, she scampered to the other side and pushed against it with her head. After several mighty heaves, she managed to roll the pebble into the hollow which she had excavated with her mandibles. After that it was the work of an instant for me to draw myself out of the pile of loose dirt.

Diana did not wait for me to thank her. Picking up her living

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

burden, she trotted toward the opening of the nest. I lost no time in following her. When I was outside, I picked out an open spot that was in bright sunlight and there I waited in anxious expectation.

Soon I was relieved to feel something grasp hold of me. I knew at once that it was Doctor De Villa's tweezers: On the journey back to the laboratory, I kept repeating over to myself, "Thank God, I'm safe! Thank God I'm safe!"

CHAPTER VIII
Among the Slave Makers

The next thing I remember I was lying on my side in my bed at De Villa's apartment. My head was swathed in bandages. I started to turn over, but the Doctor's voice arrested me.

"Careful. Better not move for a while yet. I just put a temporary covering over the incision in your head. It is likely to be somewhat tender."

"Temporary covering?" I echoed. "Why didn't you put zippers on my bean and be done with it?"

De Villa chuckled, "I can see you are yourself again. Your sense of humor is still with you. How do you feel, anyway?"

"Sick," I told him. "Sick at my stomach."

"That's due to the ether. You'll soon get over it. How about your head? Does that feel all right?"

"Sure! My head is O.K. Throbs a little. Otherwise it feels like the same old bean."

"Thank God!" De Villa exclaimed fervently. "Thank God our experiment is a success."

"Amen!" I rejoined in a voice which was trembling with reverence. Considering my attitude toward religion I was surprised at my own reaction—even more so when I remembered how I had thought first of God when I knew my life had been saved.

"I'm going to ask you to sleep now," the Doctor ordered me. "I'm awfully anxious to hear about your experiences, but for the sake of your health we had better put that off until you've had a good rest."

This suggestion was welcome enough because I was very drowsy. I closed my eyes and in a moment was fast asleep.

On awakening I found De Villa seated at my bedside.

He gave me a tumbler of milk with a glass tube to drink it with.

"Do you feel like talking now?" he wanted to know.

"You bet!" I assured him. "What do you want me to say?"

"Whatever you feel like saying. I told him about growing mushrooms inside the nest. I described the ant gangsters and the queen ant to him. I related my experiences with Lazy Mary and Diana.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He had a notebook in front of him and a pencil in his hand, but he made no use of them. I inferred that he already knew all about these things which seemed so wonderful to me. With his customary politeness he listened to me, but I could see that he wasn't interested. He asked me a question:

"The inside of the nest was dark, of course?"

"Sure. Except in the uppermost chambers it was as dark as pitch."

"Then how could you see all these things you have described to me?"

"I didn't see them, I *smelled* them!"

"What! You smelled them?"

"Sure! When I was below decks, smelling was the onliest thing. I did nothing else but!" Then I launched forth into a description of "smell images." This time the doctor was all attention. He took copious notes, asking me question after question and insisting on the most minute account of my sense impressions when I perceibed what I called a "smell image."

"Now you've made a real contribution to science!" he exclaimed. "Students of ant behavior have suspected the existence of a faculty such as you describe but it was, of course, impossible to prove it except by looking at things from the ant's consciousness, as you did."

Another matter in which he was intensely interested was the method whereby the ants communicated with each other. Other than assuring him that sounds were not used at all and that nevertheless the insects were able to convey their ideas to each other as clearly as human beings do with spoken words, I was not able to enlighten him.

"Perhaps if you make a special study of the ant language, you will be able to explain it more clearly next time," the doctor suggested.

"Next time?" I exclaimed. "What do you mean by next time? Isn't this the end of our experiment?"

"That depends entirely on you," he said. "You have performed a wonderful service, and if you feel like quitting now, that is your privilege. I was hoping, though, that you would want to go back and learn about some of the other species of ants."

"But if you wanted me to do that, why did you bring me back to my human form? Why didn't you just transfer my ant body into the other colony."

"If I had done that, you would have been torn to pieces. Ants resent the presence of strangers. You yourself saw an example of that rule when the gatekeepers killed the visitor. In order to permit you to enter a new formicary unmolested, I'll have to transfer your consciousness to the brain of an ant belonging to that particu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lar community. I was hoping, now that you've experienced the more peaceful phases of ant life, you would be ready for the exciting adventures."

"That's right," I admitted. "You promised me adventure, and most of my time was spent planting mushrooms and nursing ant babies."

"Then how would you like to join a slave-making expedition?"

"Sounds intriguing. But suppose I happened to be captured and had to become a slave myself?"

"There would be no danger of that. Mature ants rarely, if ever, are taken as slaves. The slave makers steal eggs and larvae from another colony and hatch them out in their own nest. On the other hand, the ants whose nests are raided usually put up a battle, so there is sure to be plenty of excitement and a certain amount of risk. Does that appeal to you?"

"Sure does! I don't mind being an ant at all. It's a very interesting life. Something doing every minute. No chance to get bored. It isn't exactly what I'd pick for a regular career, of course, but as a stop-gap, I rather enjoy it."

"Then you are willing for me to transplant your consciousness to the body of a slave-making ant?"

"Sure! But why ask me about it? You could easily have made the transfer while I was under the ether, and I wouldn't have known the difference until I found myself in a new ant home."

"I didn't want to do that until I had first made sure that I could restore you to your human form. You have been so helpful to me that I just couldn't force you to go back again. I'm glad, though, that you are game enough to carry on. It means that the value of our work will be at least doubled."

"But how can you be so sure that the ants will perform for us. They don't hunt slaves every day do they? I don't see how that would be possible.

"Of course not. They would soon run out of victims. Fortunately, however, I have the stage all set for a raid. For several weeks I have kept two hostile colonies in my garden. They are only a few yards apart, but are separated from each other by a ditch full of water. All I have to do is drain the ditch. It won't take long after that for the slave makes, or "Amazons," as they are sometimes called, to discover the presence of their prey. Then there is sure to be a raid.

"And is your idea to put me on the attacking or the defending side?"

"On the attacking side of course. A fight like that is always very uneven. If you were in the defending ranks, you would be almost sure to get beaten, and you'd stand a good chance of being slain."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't any of the slave makers ever get licked or killed?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. But they are larger than their adversaries and are built for fighting. This gives them a big advantage."

"But that doesn't sound very sporting to me. I don't like the idea of having to fight against set-ups like that."

"You don't need to do any personal fighting unless you want to. I suggest that you go along as a sort of ant war correspondent. You'll have all the risks, the excitement and the glory, but you won't need to fear that you are doing anything unfair or unsportsmanlike."

"O.K.!" said I. "I'll be the Floyd Gibbons of Antdom! But this time I hope you'll use some other method of paging me. That riveting machine stunt wasn't so hot, you know. It came near to burying me alive," and I told him about my narrow escape when I got caught in the landslide and came near being left alone in the deserted nest.

I suspected as much," he told me. "When you failed to appear immediately after I signaled, I was afraid something had happened to you. You have no idea how relieved I was when you finally made your appearance."

"Maybe you think I wasn't relieved too, when I felt you lift me up," I exclaimed.

"I'm sorry I caused you all that trouble. I won't happen again, of course. This time I won't try to summon you. I'll leave it to you to decide when you want to come back."

"But how am I going to let you know?"

"I'll keep closer watch this time. In order that I can be sure everything is all right with you, I am going to ask you to report to me at least once each day. This you can do by separating from the rest of the ants and standing in an open place by yourself. I'll be looking for you and I'll indicate my presence to you by picking you up and setting you down again. If you run away it will mean that you are not ready to return; but if you stand still after I set you down, I shall take it as an indication that you want me to restore you to your human body. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Sounds Jake to me. Let's go!"

Doctor De Villa had certainly laid his plans with consummate knowledge and skill. When I found myself inside the nest of Amazons, I soon became conscious that something momentous was going to happen. My companions were dashing excitedly about the nest. Sometimes two or three would gather with their heads together, like football players in a huddle and would tap each other's heads vehemently with their antennae. Evidently they were discussing the stra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tegy for the impending raid. From time to time, individual ants would come scampering into the nest from outside and would run from group to group, stopping just long enough for an exchange of signals with each group.

I surmised that they were scouts, who had been sent out to reconnoiter and who had returned to the nest t report what they had discovered.

After a great deal of this scouting and conferring, we formed in a regular column and emerged from the nest. When we came near the enemy's nest we separated into small groups, spreading out stealthily until we had encircled the doomed formicary. Apparently our adversaries had been warned of our approach, for they were already organized to resist us. The defenders were arranged in a circle, completely surrounding the nest.

My Amazon companions merely tried to break through the ring. They did not attack the opposing insects, but seemed intent on getting inside the other nest as quickly as possible. The smaller ants, however, were remarkably brave and aggressive. Without hesitation they hurled themselves at the invaders, in spite of the fact that their adversaries were nearly double their size.

There was no doubt in my mind that the strategy of the defenders had been planned in advance. While the shock troops in the front line did their best to hold back the enemy, hundreds of others came rushing out of the nest, carrying in their mandibles the eggs and cocoons. They scampered about, trying to get away to a place of safety with their precious charges. Most of these ants were pursued and overtaken by by the Amazons. Invariably they fought to the death before they would relinquish their burdens. Several of them managed to elude their enemies and ran off to places of safety. I followed one of these and saw her crawl under a rock, dragging a larva with her.

Returning to the battlefield, I found the ground strewn with dead and dying ants. Most of them were the small defenders, but I counted over a score of dead Amazons. My companions were streaming into the formicary, returning with eggs and larvae which they had found within.

I lingered behind to see what would happen at the looted nest. It wasn't long before the survivors began to straggle in. A few of them were still carrying eggs, but most of them had empty mandibles. They went back into the formicary and philosophically resumed the duties which had been interrupted by the raid.

Hurrying back to my own nest, I arrived there just in time to witness the tail end of the reception staged for the victorious warriors. Our army of raiders had constituted only a portion of our col-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ony, the remainder having stayed behind in the formicary. They greeted the successful fighters enthusiastically, stroking them with their antenna and praising them highly in the ant language.

I had the foresight to pretent I was wounded. Limping along the outskirts of the excited crowd, I tried to make myself as inconspicuous as possible. I didn't get away with the ruse, however. Several of my nest mates noticed me as I came in, and they observed that I was carrying neither egg nor cocoon. They surrounded me and gave me the razz as plainly and as thoroughly as a bunch of fight fans jeering at a yellow boxer. They paid no attention to my limp. Apparently an injured veteran received no sympathy in the tribe of the Amazons. I was glad to escape from my tormentors by mingling with the crowds surrounding the successful slave-makers.

When the excitement died down, most of the ants emerged from the nest and arranged themselves in the form of a large ring. I wondered if this was the signal for another battle, but I soon learned that a holiday had been declared to celebrate the victory.

Near one end of the circle about a dozen ants lined up. Each one held between its mandibles a tiny round pebble about the size of an ant's head. At a given signal they dropped their pebbles and began to roll them along the ground, pushing them with their forelegs,

I soon realized that this was an organized game. The idea of it was to roll the pebble along the ground as rapidly as possible. Whichever ant succeeded in getting his pebble over to the further end of the field first we declared the winner. It was quite apparent that this was no spontaneous, haphazard test of skill, because the entire proceedings were conducted in accordance with a well defined and universally recognized system of rules.

Once, when a contesting ant had fallen some distance behind the others, it picked up its pebble in its mandibles and started to run with it. These unfair tactics brought it ahead of all the others, but when it dropped the pebble and started to roll it in the proper way with its forelegs, two of the spectators, who evidently were the referees, rushed out, grabbed hold of her and dragged her bodily off the field. Another ant which pushed the pebble with her head instead of rolling it along with her forelegs was treated in a similar way.

There were several of these pebble rolling contests after which the field was cleared, and two large ants took their place in the center of the arena. Instantly they started to scuffle with each other. I thought at first I was going to witness a duel to the death, but it soon became apparent that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the ants were very careful not to inflict any dangerous injuries on each other. They were like two wrestlers. They pushed and tugged at each other's bodies. Though they made free use of their wicked mandibles for holding and shoving, they did not bite with them.

The ring seemed to be divided into two semi-circles by an imaginary diameter. Each ant tried to pull her opponent to her side of the ring. When their struggles had brought them in contact with the spectators, the fight was over. The victor would then strut out to the center of the ring and would rear up on her hind legs, turning around in all directions as if she was challenging the world.

There were plenty of the Amazons who were eager to pick up the gauntlet. Sometimes three or four would rush out at the same time. The one that got hold of the challenger first became the contender for the championship, and the others would immediately fall back.

One of the wrestlers seemed to be a big favorite and deservedly so, for she licked nine aspirants to her crown in rapid succession. Because of her fondness for grasping the heads of her opponents with her mandibles, I dubbed her "Miss Strangler Lewis."

It wasn't long before the ranks of would-be champions had been exhausted. Miss Lewis was so palpably good that no one seemed anxious to disupte her superiority. Then she took to strutting around the ring, touching one ant after another with her antennae and hurling insect insults at all of them.

When she came close to me, I recognized her as one of the group which had razzed me, because I had returned to the nest without any booty. She seemed to know me, too.

It is difficult for me to explain just how she conveyed her meaning to me. While she was "conversing" with me her antennae were touching my head and she may have tapped off her message by means of an ant Morse code. But I am not sure of this. For all I know, it might have been a case of mental telepathy. Of one thing I am certain, however. I was able to understand her just as clearly as if she had spoken to me in English. Translated, her tirade was something like this:

"So you're the Jane that went out after eggs and came back wihtout any, are you? Phooey for you—you coward. Tried to make out you were hurt too, didn't you? Well you didn't fool me with your limp. What are you anyway, an ant or a lowdown beetle? Why don't you come out and fight? Haven't you any guts? Come on, I'll dare-you!"

This was more than even a self-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

respecting war correspondent could stand, so I replied in the antennae language, "O.K., sister My derby is in the ring. But let me warn you in advance that you're not going to fool me with that antiquated head-lock of yours. I'm too wise to fall for that old stuff."

Whereupon I went for her, using tactics that were older than the headlock. Sidestepping the pass which she made at me with her mandibles, I hopped nimbly on her back. Before she knew what was happening to her, I had wrapped one of my forelegs under hers and over her neck, in a perfect half-Nelson. With quick thrusts of my five other legs, I tripped her neatly and flopped her over on her back. Before she had time to recover herself, I grabbed her head in my mandibles and dragged her quickly to the edge of the ring.

My feat seemed to make a big hit with the fans. Miss Lewis had not been a very popular champion, I learned. She was altogether too swell-headed—too much inclined to brag about her prowess and to insult her comrades.

But I soon found that the position of champion wrestler in a colony of Amazons was not a very enviable one. Leadership always has its penalties. Mine was that I had to take on all comers. It was no easy matter to wrestle with a dozen fresh contestants one after the other in rapid succession with no rests between falls. Thanks to the tricks I had learned as a human wrestler and which the ants did not seem able to solve, I managed to get through the ordeal with my laurels undisturbed, but by the time the championship had been conceded to me, I was completely exhausted.

Thus ended the afternoon of sports, and I was escorted back to the nest in triumph.

CHAPTER IX
Ant Bootleggers

It was then that I noticed for the first time that our formicary was tenanted by ants of another species beside our own. On my previous visits to the nest I had not perceived this—probably because of the prevailing excitement and my unfamiliarity with the characteristic odors of my neighbors.

With more leisure for observation I soon learned, not only that the other occupants of the nest were of an entirely different species, but that they actually were the same kind of ants which we had fought against in our recent raiding campaign. Wonder of wonders, the Amazons and their small foreign associates were living together in the same nest, and the most friendly relations seemed to exist between them.

Truth finally dawned on me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The small ants were slaves! They had been hatched inside the Amazons' formicary from eggs stolen in some previous raid. And now they were in full charge of all activities of the nest with the exception of fighting.

The Slave Makers were wonderful warriors but seemed to be useless for any other purpose. All the work, such as enlarging the nest, taking care of the young and foraging for food, was done by the slaves. The Amazons lived lives of indolence. Because of this they had deteriorated in intelligence. If we had been deprived of our faithful servants, I am sure we would have starved. Some of us didn't know enough to feed ourselves, when natural food, such as a grub or caterpillar, was placed before us. The slaves seemed perfectly contented with their lot. They could easily have escaped if they had wanted to; but they remained faithful to their captors. It seemed incongruous the way these little hustlers would look after the big, ungainly fighting ants. They would clean us with the utmost care, licking our bodies all over and would force us to partake of the choicests morsels of food which they had previously prepared and regurgitated for us. They reminded me of a tender mother taking care of an overgrown, imbecile child.

In the relations between the Amazons and their slaves I saw an analogy with the experience of human beings. In ancient Rome, for instance, the indolence and luxury made possible because of large numbers of slaves taken in wars soon led to decadence of the Roman race and ultimately to its destruction. It was quite apparent to me that among the ants, as has sometimes been the case among men, the masters are slaves and the slaves are the real masters.

Strange to say, these insect slave-makers were not only indolent but dissipated as well. When she was not fighting or playing games, the life of an Amazon was one of self-indulgence and drunkenness. They actually became drunk; I mean just that. They were supplied regularly with a very intoxicating liquor by guests who were pampered and petted and fed and who had free run of the nest. For obvious reasons I called these strange insects "Ant Bootleggers."

They reminded me very strongly of a verse from Kipling's "Vampire":

> "A fool there was and he made his prayer
> Even as you and I
> To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair."

Each of the Amazons, I learned, was in the habit of making her prayer to a hank of hair. And it was blond hair, too—beautiful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

golden yellow in hue. The bootleggers, who resembled small beetles, were distingushed by these fine soft bunches of trichomes appended to the sides of their bodies. The blond locks concealed the openings of glands, of which each beetle possessed six. These glands secreted an aromatic, extremely volatile liquid. I don't believe that this liquor had any nutritive value whatever; nevertheless, the ants seemed to prefer it to good food.

The Amazons were continually licking the hanks of hair, and they swallowed the secretions with great relish.

Out of curiosity I tried it myself. The stuff had a very strong smell and a fiery taste. When I gulped it down, it went to my head, making me feel giddy and carefree. Thus it was that I drew an analogy between these guest beetles and human bootleggers. They were pampered, encouraged, protected and supported in luxury, just because they provided something from which their patrons derived a kick.

I found out later that the little slaves went to all sorts of extremes in looking after these bootleggers. The beetles were constantly being fed by the busy little workers. They bred inside the formicary, and the ant nurses took better care of their eggs than they did of their own brood.

The bootleggers and the slaves were not the only guests who made their homes in the City of the Amazons. I noticed that some of the ants which had remained at home during the raid had tiny mites clinging to them. They made me think of the familiar doggerel:

"Fleas have other fleas to bite 'em
And so on, ad infinitum."

But these Antennophori, or ant mites, did not bite their hosts. Instead of being pests they were more like pets. None of the ants seemed to object to their presence in the least, and the parasites took particular pains not to make themselves objectionable. Some of the ants had only one of the mites. Others had as many as five of the little beggars clinging to their bodies. No matter how many of them were riding around on a single ant, they always arranged themselves symmetrically so as to balance each other and to cause the least possible amount of discomfort to their host.

A solitary mite would cling to the under part of the ant's head. Two would attach themselves to the sides of the host's head or to the flanks of its gaster. When there were three, one would hang under the head and the other two would be fastened on either side of the body. In a similar way, four of five would distribute themselves in symmetrical patterns over the ant's person.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I happened to come close to a heavily populated ant, and in a twinkling of an eye, one of the mites had transferred its attentions to me. It clung to the under side of my head, successfully defeating all my attempts to dislodge it. Immediately the bugs remaining on the other ant re-arranged themselves to take care of the change in equilibrium.

I soon got over the first excitements of trying to rid myself of the mite which had adopted me. Then the little rascal began to beg for food. It had long, soft legs which felt exactly the same as the antennae of an ant. With these legs, it titillated my head in a way that was actually pleasing to me. It reminded me of a cute little puppy that had been trained to beg for food by sitting up on its hind legs. I rewarded it with a droplet of regurgitated food, and it thanked me eloquently with its pleasing, antenna-like legs.

It then becamse clear to me why the ants seemed so tolerant of these tiny parasites. Far from being offensive, they were very pleasant to have around. The occupied the same positions in the ant nest that a pet cat or dog does in a human habitation.

Despite the allurements of the golden haired bootleggers and the caresses of the ant pets, I soon became weary of the sedentary life of slave making ants. All of a sudden I realized that I had failed to keep my promise to report each day to Doctor De Villa. Then and there I resolved to lose no time in tearing myself away from the bad influence of the Amazon colony. I found out, however, that this wasn't as easy as I had expected. Whenever I started to leave the nest, a dozen or so of the others insisted on accompanying me. Perhaps this was due to the glamour which always surrounded a champion. Like the hangers-on at a boxer's training quarters, my fans hovered around me. It was impossible to shake them off.

Even with my unwelcome bodyguard I felt confident that the doctor would be able to recognize me by the hair which he had tied around my gaster. But though I stood around outside the nest for what must have been several hours, I was not picked up. When darkness fell and the ground became cold, I was forced to seek the shelter of the formicary.

Much as I tried to keep my spirits up, I could not help worrying. Suppose something had happened to De Villa? He might easily have met with an accident or become ill so that he could not come and get me. If anything like that had happened, what would become of me? Would I be forced to spend the rest of my existence among those unattractive, degenerate insects? I was almost tempted to seek out a golden haired beetle and go on a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spree so that I could forget my troubles. I had sense enough to realize, however, the such an act might easily spell my permanent ruin. In my present predicament it was absolutely necessary for me to keep sober and in full possession of my faculties.

For two successive days I strove to attract De Villa's attention. Several times I succeeded in breaking away from my coterie of admirers long enough to stand alone for several minutes, but still I did not feel myself lifted. De Villa's failure to rescue me became more and more puzzling to me. It wasn't like him to be neglectful. Surely something must have happened to him.

Then one morning, I suddenly found out what was wrong. I remembered that the only way De Villa could recognize me was by the hair which he had tied about my body. During my sojourn among the Amazons I had been through a lot of tumbling and scuffling. Was the identifying hair still there? With my legs, I explored my body, from my head to the tip of my gaster. The hair had disappeared!

All day long I hunted for another hair. Late in the afternoon, when I had just about given up the search, I came across enough hairs to mark the entire colony. They were on the body of a dead caterpillar. I soon gnawed off one of the fine hairs and wrapped it around my body. After considerable effort, I managed to tie a knot in it with my legs.

By the time I had accomplished this difficult feat it was already dark, and there was nothing for me to do but go back to the formicary and wait for daylight.

Next morning I awoke to find the nest charged with excitement. For some reason, which I was not able to fathom, another holiday had been declared. I tried to sneak away but without success. It would have been as easy for Jack Dempsey to hide in the midst of a crowd of fight fans as for me, the champion wrestler of the Amazon colony, to make my getaway on a holiday like this.

Since there was nothing for me to do but go along with the gang, I tried to make the most of it.

As before, they started with the pebble rolling game. I was foolish enough to attempt the introduction of a new game for Antdom. It occurred to me that if they were intelligent enough to roll pebbles along the ground it ought to be possible to teach them the rudiments of a game like football. I managed to get the attention of a group of the contestants long enough to divide them into two teams and to explain to them that we would use only a single large pebble and that one side would try to roll it to one end of the arena while the other team would try to prevent them from doing so.

You can easily imagine what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

happened after that. Unfortunately it had not been possible for me to explain the rules to all of the spectators. They kept running out on the playing field, grabbing the pebble or pushing the players to one side. They were like a gang of hoodlums starting a riot because the home team was getting licked.

It wasn't long before they began to get rough. Instead of jostling and wrestling in a good-natured way, they began to snap at each other murderously with their dangerous mandibles. I was horrified to see a score of lifeless bodies, most of them with heads and legs missing, lying on the ground.

There seemed to be no rhyme or reason for the carnage—no distinction between friend and foe. Once the lust for battle had been aroused, the ants seemed to run amuck, snapping at each other indiscriminately.

Naturally I got my share of it.

Without warning, a militant lady ant seized one of my legs between her powerful mandibles and proceeded to bite it off. An instant later another one sunk her pincers into my side. I struggled with all my might to free myself, but both of them clung to me with more tenacity than any bulldog ever though of using.

As if this wasn't enough, I was horrified to see a third ant come rushing toward me with murder in her eye. At first I had a faint hope that she might help me, but when I recognized her, I had to abandon that idea.

She was Miss Strangler Lewis!

When she was close to me, she taunted me, somewhat like this:

"So this is you, is it? I've found you at last. Now I've got you just where I want you, Miss New Champion!"

Then she hopped on my back, holding me firmly with her six legs, while she calmly and deliberately proceeded to gnaw my head off! She didn't seem to be in much of a hurry about it, either. With all the fiendish cruelty of a cat tormenting a mouse, she nibbled at my neck, nipping off small pieces and pausing between nips to enjoy my suffering.

I made one last Herculean effort to shake off my adversaries. Throwing myself on my side, I rolled over and over. But my assailants clung to me, intent on tearing me to pieces.

"Looks like curtains for me," I told myself, as, weak and exhausted, I quite struggling and waited for the end.

My rescue came from a totally unexpected source. Things happened so quickly and so mysteriously that for a while I was at a loss to account for them. First I noticed that Miss Lewis had stopped gnawing at my neck and had released her hold on me. Then I saw her lifeless body, crushed into a shapeless mass, drop to the ground beside me. A moment later, another mangled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gaster, minus the head, lay next to it. I looked at my side and saw a bodiless head still clinging to me. This miraculous turn of events put new life in me, and I started to grappel with my third adversary. But before I could do anything myself, two huge metal jaws came down from the heavens, seized the ant and squeezed it to death.

When I felt myself held gently between those same jaws and lifted off the ground, I suddenly realized that I had been saved by my human friend, Doctor De Villa.

CHAPTER X
Ant Cowpunchers

"What in the world happened to you?"

This was the first question Doctor De Villa put to me when I was well enough to talk to him after my human body had been restored to me.

"I got into a fight," I informed him.

"So I noticed. But what happened to you before that? Why didn't you come out and report to me each day, as we agreed?"

I told him about losing the identifying hair in the wrestling match and my failure to discover its absence until the day before my rescue.

"But there was a hair tied around your body when I picked you out of that bunch of fighting ants. It was yellow instead of white, but I supposed it had become stained."

"I dug that hair up myself after I found I had lost the other one. It sure was a tough job for me to tie it in a knot that would hold."

"That was mighty resourceful on your part—and it was exceedingly fortunate for you. If it hadn't been for that hair, I never would have been able to recognize you in that hurley-burley of battling insects. When I did finally locate you, I soon realized I had arrived just in time. A few minutes longer and you, including the human part of your brain, would have been destroyed. As it was your ant body was so badly mutilated that there was no hope for it. Luckily you kept your brain alive just long enough for me to make the transfer."

"O.K., Doc. Much obliged for saving me. So that's that. What comes next?"

"What comes next? Have you had enough of ant adventures?"

"As far as those slave makers are concerned, I'm thoroughly washed up on them. They are a bum lot—lazy, vicious and unreliable. They are not at all like the mushroom growers. I rather enjoyed living with that first bunch. In fact I never was so happy in my life. I wouldn't mind going back to them for a few days if you'll promise not to start any young earthquakes with that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

riveting machine of yours."

"You don't need to be afraid of that," the Doctor grinned. "I never make the same mistake twice."

"A while back you said you never made any mistakes," I reminded him.

"Did I really say that? Perhaps I did. It was rather egotistical wasn't it—egotistical and silly. Everybody makes mistakes. The only persons who never make mistakes are those who never accomplish anything. But if you are really serious about being willing to pay more more visit to Antdom, I can promise you some experiences which will be even more pleasant and more interesting than your work among the Mushroom Growers. How would you like to become an Ant Cowpuncher?"

"An Ant Cowpuncher!" I cried. "That certainly sounds alluring. Will I have to ride a bucking horsefly?"

"No you won't have to do any bronco busting. But you'll have a chance to help herd the ant's cattle."

"That *is* interesting. Do you mean that ants not only raise crops but keep livestock as well?"

"That is precisely what I do mean. And I have a splendid colony of Cattle Herders in my garden. The correct name for them is Honey Ants. Would you like to join them for a few days?"

"Sure! Why not?" was my enthusiastic response. "But there's one condition I'd like to make."

"And that is?"

"That you figure out some better way to recognize me when I want to return to you. So far your systems have been on hundred percent flops."

"Perhaps you are right. But I think I can forestall any possible difficulties by painting your back with a spot of orange color."

"But if you do that, won't the other ants notice it and think there is something phoney about me?"

"You need have no fears on that score. I have repeatedly experimented with ants marked in this manner, and none of the other ants seemed to notice the difference in their comrade's looks."

"And you will be sure to keep a close look-out for me?"

"You may depend on that absolutely."

"O.K., then. I'm ready to become an Ant Cowpuncher."

"I am sure you will enjoy living among the Honey Ants," the doctor assured me. "You'll find them very nice people—much nicer than the Amazons. They are a very favored race of ants. Their food supply consists almost exclusively of manna."

"Manna?" I exclaimed. "Do you mean the stuff mentioned in the Bible—the food that was supposed to have been sent down from heaven to feed the Jews

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when they were in the wilderness?"

"Precisely. It isn't at all surprising that the Jews regarded the finding of manna as a miracle. That was the only way they could account for the presence of these deposits of sweet, nutritious food on the leaves of desert plants. We know now that the manna which fed the Israelites was produced by a species of plant lice which suck the sap from plants. In going through the bodies of these insects, the sap undergoes changes which convert it into a syrupy liquid called honey dew. The lice excrete this honey dew on the leaves of the plants. When it dries, the residue is a white, sugary scale, which the Jews called manna. In Australia, the gathering of manna, or "sugar lerp" as it is called, is a profitable industry today. One man can collect several pounds of it in a day, and there is always a ready market for it."

"That's very interesting," I remarked, "But how do the ants get this manna?"

"Sometimes they gather it from the leaves, as the Israelites did. But more often, they obtain it in the original form of honey dew, direct from the lice."

"But how?" I persisted.

"You'll soon find that out when you join the Honey Ants. Wouldn't you rather wait and get your information first hand?"

"Sure! That will be the best way to find things out, won't it?"

Ignoring my question, Doctor De Villa went on: "Speaking of the Israelites, the Honey Ants are similar to the ancient Jews in other ways. Like the Israelites, they have reached the pastoral stage in their development. Perhaps I ought to explain that one of the strongest points of resemblance between ants and men is that both genera have developed along parallel lines.

"The most primitive races, of both ants and men, are hunters. They are represented today by the African savage (for the men) and by Driver Ants (for the insects). And just as there are semi-savage tribes of men who live principally on fruit, nuts and other vegetable foods that grow wild, so there are also ants which gather seeds of wild plants and store them in their underground granaries against the time when there is no food left to be gathered in the field.

"Fighting races, like the Huns and the Tartars, who at times have lived principally by warring on other human beings, have their counterparts in the Amazon Ants, or Slave Makers.

"The next stage is the pastoral or semi-civilized period. Even today there are many nomadic tribes who gain their livelihood by keeping flocks of domesticated animals. In many respects the Honey Ants resemble these pastoral people very closely.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You have already had an opportunity to study the Agricultural Ants, who occupy the next stage in the upward climb. Like farmers who live by tilling the soil, the Mushroom Growers plant their crops, take care of them and reap the harvest. In one sense, therefore, these Mushroom Growers have reached a very high stage of development—much higher than any animal, except man, has ever attained.

"So far the ants have not arrived at the topmost stage reached by the most highly developed men. We call this the industrial and cultural age, which is characterized by the use of machinery and by the acquisition and recording of knowledge.

"No animal—not even the ant—has come anywhere near accomplishing what man has done in conquering and utilizing the forces of nature and in gaining knowledge and passing it on to posterity.

"On the other hand, there is one species of ant which has taken the first step toward the industrial age. They are called the Weaver Ants. Because they are the only animals, except human beings, who make conscious use of a tool, they may well be regarded as the most highly developed animals next to man."

"And will I have a chance to live among the Weaver Ants?" I asked.

"If you wish. But possibly you may have an opportunity to observe them from the outside. I have a colony of Weaver Ants who are close neighbors of the Honey Ants. You may be able to learn a great deal about them without necessarily becoming one of them."

"That's all very intriguing," said I. "And now, if you don't mind, I'll hit the hay."

The following day I again submitted to an operation. Having my head excavated was now becoming a commonplace thing to me. It was not exactly an enjoyable experience, but I regarded it in much the same light as I did a series of disagreeable but necessary trips to the dentist.

I had no difficulty in getting by the doorkeepers of the Cow Punchers' nest. My password was a crop full of honey which Doctor De Villa had permitted me to imbibe before he placed me near my new home.

The architecture of this formicary was quite different from those of the Mushroom Growers or the Slave Makers, but in the general arrangement of the chambers and passageways, the effect was quite similar. One of the distinguishing features of the Honey Ants' nest was a system of long narrow tunnels, extending in several directions for long distances from the central portion. I noticed that in one of these tunnels the work of excavation was still going on. Through it hustled two steady

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

streams of busy ants. Those coming out were carrying tiny grains of earth in their mandibles which they painstakingly deposited outside the nest.

After indulging in the customary regurgitation ceremonies with two of my comrades, I joined the procession of unladen ants and marched into the tunnel. I must have made at least a hundred round trips, each time carrying a piece of dirt outside, before I discovered the purpose of this sapper work. We had finally reached what must have been the roots of some plant or shrub. Clinging to these roots were a number of little insects. In the darkness I could not see them of course, but by passing my feelers over one of them I found out that its body was shaped like a tiny lemon. The odor which emanated from these bugs was delightful. It was a sweet smell, like that of honey, but much more penetrating and appetizing.

Remembering the bootleggers and the Mushroom Growers, I jumped to the conclusion that the bugs we had just found were parasites of an entirely different species. It wasn't long, however, before I learned that far from being parasites, these tiny friends of ours furnished us with ample supplies of excellent, pleasing food. Not only that, but they were the *only* source of food which this particular colony of ants possessed.

By examining them more carefully and by visualizing what they would probably look like, I recognized the oval-shaped insects as Aphids or Plant Lice. I recalled that when I was a youngster several of our rose bushes had been seriously infested by these tiny pests. Their destructive effect on plants was due to their habit of boring through the bark and sucking the sweet sap into their bodies.

At first I thought that the ants would obtain this food, just as they secured it from each other—by regurgitation, but this was not the case. Apparently the Aphids were able to digest the plant sap and still secrete a very palatable and nourishing residue for the ants' benefit.

By watching the other ants, I learned how this food was secured. They stroked the aphids very gently and tenderly with their antennae. Evidently this gave pleasure to the plant lice, which obligingly secreted a droplet of honey dew. The ant promptly lapped up the globule and then repeated the same performance with another Aphid.

Upon completing this "milking" process with all the Aphids, the ants returned to the center of the nest. I followed them to see what they would do next.

Penetrating far into the lowermost recesses of the nest we entered a vaulted chamber. The arched roof was covered with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some of the most peculiar objects I have ever "perceived." From their "smell images" I pictured them as being spherical in form. They were grouped in clusters like bunches of small grapes or currants. At first I thought they were some kind of fruit, which like the "Kohlrabis" of the Mushroom Growers had been trained to grow undergrojnd. But when, following the example of the others, I crawled up the wall of the cavern and approached these mysterious objects, I discovered to my astonishment that they were living ants!

It was no wonder that I hadn't recognized them when I first entered their chamber, for their bodies were swollen until they were at least ten times the normal size of worker ants. They reminded me somewhat of the large queen ant I had visited in the nest of the Mushroom Growers, but her gaster was oval in shape while the bodies of the huge Honey Ants were almost perfect spheres.

The dairymaids which had just come from the herd of Aphids disgorged the honey dew from their crops into the mouths of the currant-like ants, thus making them even larger than they were before. Then I understood. The inhabitants of this chamber were Repletes—living flagons or honey-jars. Their crops had become distended until they made up nearly the entire bulk of the insect, squeezing all their other organs into very tiny spaces. Something told me that these self-sacrificing creatures were doomed to remain there for the rest of their lives, clinging to the roof of this subterranean chamber and serving as storage receptacles for the municipal food of the colony.

As I was about to leave the cavern of the Repletes, I smelled two or three newcomers, who did not seem to have any honey dew in their corps. They climbed up to the roof, each approaching one of the Repletes and demanding food. The dutiful insects responded by regurgitating some of the honey dew from their enormous crops and the workers went away satisfied and strengthened for the labors they were destined to perform.

Together with my newly found companions, I returned to the place where we had discovered the Aphids. The little cave which had been excavated around the roots where they were feeding had become uncomfortably cool, from which I inferred that night had fallen. With the most solicitous care; each ant picked up an Aphid between its mandibles and trotted back to the living quarters. Thus our cattle were carried to their underground "stables" which felt as if they were at least ten degrees warmer than their feeding place.

On the following morning,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when the earth began to warm up, we again picked up our cattle, carrying them back to the roots on which we had first found them.

In this formicary, as in the other two that I had previously visited, there was a lot of work to do besides that of obtaining food. The nest was always scrupulously clean and free from refuse of every description. To make this possible a large squad of scavengers and janitors were kept constantly busy. There was also a considerable number of nurses whose duty it was to take care of the eggs, larvae and nymphs, shifting them from place to place, licking them repeatedly to cleanse them and feeding the young antlets. Since I wasn't especially interested in the career of a janitor or a nurse, I stuck to the job I had picked out first—namely that of herding the cattle.

I was kept so busy that there was not much time for reflection, but during one of those rare occasions when I was resting, it occurred to me that this particular colony was very happily situated. Thanks to the subterranean habits of the plant lice, we could even secure our food supply without going out of the nest. That led me to wonder if any of the inhabitants of the formicary would ever want to leave our underground home, except to get rid of dirt or refuse. It was perfectly obvious that a large number of them were constantly departing from the nest and returning to it again, for the passages leading to the exit were always crowded with workers. I watched them closely to see if they were excavators or scavengers, but most of them carried no burdens whatever.

"Why?" I asked myself.

The question puzzled me so much that I determined to find out for myself. All I had to do was to follow some of my nestmates, who were outward bound. It was thus I learned that we had two kinds of cattle — one which lived underground, sucking the sap from roots, and the other which fed on the branches and twigs of plants above the ground.

The Aphids which lived in the open air seemed to be larger and more numerous than our underground herds. In the bright sunlight, I had a much better opportunity to study them. Their bodies were eggshaped and were pale green in color. Each had six short legs and a tiny head which was equipped with a very efficient tool for boring through the bark and sucking out the sap. I noticed that some of them had wings while others had none. This surprising fact was accounted for when I saw one of the ant cowpunchers neatly amputate the wings from one of our flying cows. The operation was done so skillfully that the patient didn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seem to mind it in the least. This was the ant's method of branding her cattle and preventing them from escaping.

CHAPTER XI
Fighting Cattle Rustlers

I learned that the duties of an ant cattle herder were numerous, varied and arduous. Not only did we have to "milk" our charges regularly and provide them with comfortable shelter, but we also protected them from their natural enemies and acted as nursemaids for their young. We even had insect prototypes of "cattle rustlers" to contend with.

Our colony, which must have numbered at least a hundred thousand, owned several herds of Aphids. The one which fed on plants located close to the nest were carried one by one into the formicary each evening. Each morning they were again lugged out into the open air and were placed on the most succulent branches. When the feeding plants were at a considerable distance from headquarters, the ants saved themselves the work of toting their charges back and forth by building tents into which they drove the Aphids at night. Constructed of fragments of wood fiber, matted together into a sort of felt, these insect cow-sheds provided warm, comfortable homes which were impervious to rain.

Even here, the ant guardians took the most solicitous care of their cattle's brood. As soon as any eggs were laid by the Aphids, they were immediately picked up by the ants and were carried inside the formicary, where special chambers were reserved for them. The nurses who attended the Aphid eggs took better care of them than they did of the young ants. This explained to me one of the mysteries which puzzled me when I was an amateur gardener. Even though the human beings who own the plants may succeed in wiping out an entire generation of Aphids their progeny usually appear on the scene the following spring, thanks to the protection they have received from their friends and owners—the ants.

I became very much attached to the ant cows. They seemed such droll, carefree, happy-go-lucky creatures. One of them in particular, which I loved to watch, had all the comedy sense of a successful cow. She always attacked her work with boisterous enthusiasm. When she was sucking the sap from a tender branch, she would cock her head in the most roguish fashion and would stick her two hind legs straight up in the air. The way she manipulated her legs reminded me of a famous comedienne of the stage and screen, and I promptly christened her "Charlotte Greenwood."

Once when I was at some dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tance away from Charlotte, busily engaged in "milking" honey dew from one of her companions, I looked up just in time to witness a tragedy. With marvelous agility a horrible creature, pale yellow in color, with a black stripe running down its back, darted out from under a leaf and seized one of the Aphids in its powerful jaws. It didn't attempt to chew or swallow its victim, being content with sucking all the life juices out of the hapless louse. Within what seemed but a few seconds there was nothing left of the Aphid but a hollow shell of chitin. I afterward learned that the assassin was a lace wing larva, commonly known as an Aphid Lion.

As quickly as I could, I hurried toward Charlotte to warn her of her danger, for she was but a short distance away from the scene of the murder. But before I could reach her, the lion dropped its kill and made a vicious snap at her. Evidently she had received some intimation of her peril, for she gave a comical sideways jump and the larva's spring fell short. At the same instant she discharged from two tubercles protruding out of her body a sticky secretion which completely covered the face and forceps of the lion.

An occasion of this sort was of course no time for comedy and I am sure that Charlotte's sole thought was to defend herself in the only way she knew how, but to me the episode was one of the funniest situations I have ever seen.

Surprised and disconcerted by this unexpected attack from his intended victim, the lion retired and tried to wipe the rapidly hardening secretion from its face. It reminded me for all the world of a fat and unpopular movie "heavy" who has just been decorated with a gooey custard pie.

Funny as it seemed to me, that slapstick comedy trick spelled the doom of Mister Lion. Attracted by the unusual vibrations of the twig on which all this took place, one of the ant guardians rushed at the larva and sunk its mandibles in its neck.

Ordinarily, because of its exceptional agility and its terrible jaws, one of these Aphid Lions would be more than a match for a single ant. But, thanks to Charlotte's strategy, the would-be murderer became the victim. By the time I arrived on the scene, its body was being torn to pieces by the other ant cowpunchers which had hastened to the rescue.

During the short time I was among the Honey Ants, I witnessed many such battles and participated in two or three of them. Whenever we succeeded in locating one of these murderous Aphid Lions, several of us attacked it at once, and we never failed to slay the monster. Before we put them out of the way, however, they usually took

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frightful toll from our herds of Ant Cows.

One of my comrades was remarkably skillful in apprehending these criminals. Her methods would do credit to a scientific human detective. Whenever she came across the sucked-out shell of an Aphid, she set out to trail the murderer. Sometimes, when the body of the victim had fallen from the branch to the ground, the Ant Sleuth needed nothing more than a drop of aphid juice (corresponding to blood) as a clew to the identity of the assassin. With inexorable patience, she would search among the twigs and leaves until she located her quarry, then she would enlist a handful of ant deputies and would lead them in lynching the culprit.

Because of aptitude in catching criminals, I dubbed this ant, Miss Sherlocka Holmes.

Sherlocka also led in the work of eliminating other criminals besides the Aphid Lions. Like human cowpunchers we ants had to contend with cattle rustlers belonging to our own race.

So crafty were these thieves thag it was some time before we discovered their presence. Our first inkling that we were being robbed was when we tried to "milk" a herd of Aphids which we had set out to pasture near the tips of some branches at a considerable distance away from our nest. Time after time, when we came to them and stroked them in the usual way we found that they could give us only very small amounts of honey dew, when they should have had a plentiful supply.

We also noticed that the size of this particular flock was decreasing very rapidly, yet there were no dead bodies or other indications that our cattle were being killed by Aphid Lions. So long as we remained near the Aphids nothing happened, but when we went away for a while to attend our other flocks and then returned we always found some of the Aphids missing and the rest of them drained of their honey dew

Sherlocka took upon herself the task of solving the mystery. Noticing that she remained behind after all the other Honey Ants had departed, I decided to stay with her. Following her example, I crawled up on a leaf which was a few inches away from the Aphids' feeding ground. There was a brisk wind blowing in a direction which carried our scent away from the pasture. We could plainly distinguish the sweet, pleasant smell of our cattle as they sucked contentedly on the tender twigs.

Suddenly an unmistakable ant odor was wafted to our antennae. But it was the smell of ants belonging to an entirely different race from ours. Crawling to the edge of the leaf, I peered over. There they were sure enough! About a dozen of the Ant Rus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tlers were busily engaged in "milking" our cows. When they had extracted the last drop of honey dew, they scampered off, crossing to another shrub by means of a branch which hung over and touched the bush on which our cattle were feeding. The last two to leave picked up an Aphid apiece and carried them off.

This was too much for Sherlocka. Without running for help as she usually did when she discovered an Aphid Lion, she rushed along the branch and made a vicious attack on the vanguard of the rustlers. I was right behind her and I managed to hop on the back of one of the Aphid stealers. Had the rest of the band turned to fight, Sherlocka and I would probably have been slaughtered, but they evidently thought our entire tribe was back of us, for they retreated hurriedly, leaving their two comrades to their fate.

Though the rustlers were much bigger than we, Sherlocka and I made short work of our adversaries. Our victory was largely due to the unexpectedness of our attack and to the fact that the rustlers didn't have sense enough to drop the Aphids which they held fast in their mandibles until we had killed them. Strange to say, the two lice didn't seem to be hurt in the least. As soon as the smoke of battle had cleared away, they nonchalantly inserted their sucking tubes into the branch on which they were standing and proceeded to wave their hind legs about as if they were glad they were still alive.

After that we kept ten or twelve of our "cowgirls," including Sherlocka and me, constantly on guard over that particular herd. Several times the rustlers made their appearance, but as soon as they caught our scent, they would beat a hasty retreat. They didn't seem numerous enough or bold enough to put up a real battle for the possession of the plant lice. Though the Aphids were in one sense wild creatures that anyone had a right to kill or to use, there seemed to be a clear understanding that this particular herd belonged to us by right of original possession. The rustlers knew that their raids had been illegal, and for that reason they apparently didn't feel justified in attempting to dispute possession of the cattle by means of mass warfare.

CHAPTER XII
The Ant That Used a Tool

One day, after one of these half-hearted attempts at rustling on the part of the alien ants, my curiosity got the better of me, and I did a very reckless thing.

I followed the rustlers to their home!

Fully aware was I of the risks I was taking in thus venturing single-handed into the enemy's territory. Had I been caught any-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where near the home of the other ants, I would have been executed on the spot as a spy. Fortunately the wind was in my favor, blowing full in my face, so that the ants ahead of me had no way of knowing I was following them. I had expected them to climb down the trunk of the shrub to an underground nest similar to all the other ant homes I had seen, but I learned that this particular species of ant built its nest right in among the branches.

Soon we came to a large leaf which was swarming with ants. I selected a position where I could see and smell well without being seen or scented by them. What I witnessed then was made up of a combination of dim, imperfect visual impressions together with very clear "smell-pictures." Several of the ants clung together in a line, as children do when they play "London Bridge Is Falling Down." With her two forelegs, each ant grasped the body of the one in front of her, until a chain several inches long had been formed. Then the foremost ant took hold of the edge of the leaf in her mandibles and hung on for dear life. Slowly the line behind her backed away, all the insects pulling together until the leaf had been curled into a tube. As the distant edge was drawn close, it was grasped in the mandibles of a row of ants who were standing side by side on the leaf to receive it.

Then came the most astonishing sight I have ever seen. Working from the inside, one of the ants started to move back and forth across the place where the edges of the leaf were being held together. After she had made several trips back and forth along the leaf, I saw that the joint was being made fast by strands of fine, silky thread. At first I thought the ant was spinning this thread, just as a spider does, but I soon saw that the silk was coming not from her own mouth but from something she was holding between her mandibles. When she came to the end of the leaf that was close to my hiding place, I was able to find out what this object was. It was a full grown larva—an ant grub which had just reached the point in its development when it was ready to spin its cocoon!

Holding this larva in her mandibles, the ant weaver squeezed it gently, forcing it to spin its silk. Thus she was using one of her baby sitters as a combined distaff, spinning wheel, and shuttle.

After she had passed back and forth across the seam repeatedly, she threaded the larva in and out in such a way as to weave a strong fabric which held the edges of the leaf firmly together.

So absorbed had I been in watching the Weaver Ants, that I did not notice that the sky had become clouded and it had begun to sprinkle. Suddenly the heavens

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opened and the rain came down in torrents.

I was almost tempted to make a rush for the protection of the Weavers' leaf home, which I had just seen them construct. But I knew instinctively that I would be torn to pieces the moment I came within reach of their murderous mandibles, so I refrained from acting on this foolish impulse. It was imperative for me to get back to the nest of the Honey Ants as quickly as possible; that was clear.

But how to accomplish this?

Knowing that I was leaving a strongly scented trail behind me wherever I walked, I hadn't felt the slightest fear about wandering so far away from home. But now that the heavy rain had obliterated all traces of my footsteps, I became somewhat concerned about finding my way back.

Like a horseman who had lost his way and how gives his steed the rein, depending on its animal instinct to bring him safely back to the stable, I decided to relinquish the hold which the human part of my brain exercised over my body and allow my ant nature and intelligence to have its unrestricted sway.

Without a moment's hesitation, my ant-legs carried me speadily on my way. The human segment of my brain didn't have the slightest idea where I was going, but the ant seemed absolutely sure of itself.

Though I made no effort to control the movements of my body, I did keep my human consciousness on the alert. I thought at first that my ant-nature would try to find its way back by remembering in reverse order the path I had taken on the outward journey. I soon became convinced, however, that this method was not used. Had I followed the same path on the way back, I would certainly have recognized at least one or two landmarks, but such was not the case. On the contrary I felt certain that I was returning by a different and much shorter route.

It seemed but a few seconds before I found myself at the opening of our nest.

The only way I can account for my astonishing success in finding my way back is that I seemed to carry somewhere in my body an inductive compass which automatically pointed out to me the direction in which I was to move. Naturally my path, leading along twigs, across leaves, down branches, over grass blades and around stones, was far from straight. Yet I seemed to keep in mind constantly the consciousness that the nest was in a certain direction from me and thither I went, arriving at my destination without the least bit of searching.

Within the nest there seemed to be a lot of activity going on. Noticing the disturbance, I feared that the lower levels of our for-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

micary had been flooded by the rain, but such was not the case. Most of the excitement seemed to be centered on the winged members of our colony. During the last few days hundreds of these aviator ants had been wandering around in the underground passageway, but they had not been permitted to leave the nest. There were two kinds of them. By far the greater majority were only slightly larger than the rest of us, but were quite different from the workers in structure. I noticed particularly that their eyes seemed to be very well developed, and I guessed that they were the male ants.

The other winged ants, which were fewer in number than the males, must have been at least three times as large as their brothers. They were the true females who were destined to become the queen mothers of future colonies.

Hitherto these winged inmates of our city had been very docile. They had been perfectly content to remain inside the nest, where the workers had fed them, cleansed them, and attended to all their other needs. But now they seemed impatient to be off. In spite of the rain and the coldness of that stormy afternoon, they kept running about, struggling to get outside the nest. This the conscientious and wise workers would not permit. Gently but firmly, they caught hold of their overzealous sisters and brothers and restrained them, dragging them back into the lower chambers of the nest.

On the following day, which was warm and sunshiny, the same performance was repeated. The workers, who were usually so diligent, didn't perform a lick of work that day. They completely neglected their herds of plant lice and spent the entire day in running excitedly about the nest, tenderly cleansing the winged ants, feeding them and caressing them. As on the previous day, the males and virgin winged females were like a great herd of firehorses, pawing the ground in their eagerness to be off; but this the workers, who seemed to control the situation, would not permit them to do.

Naturally I participated in the excitement and did my share of grooming and provisioning the would-be aviators. I seemed to have a feeling within me such as a baby feels a few days before Christmas. I knew that something important was going to happen soon but that the time was not quite ripe yet.

It wasn't until the second day after the rainstorm that the winged ants were allowed to depart. When the sun had risen high enough so that the ground was delightfully warm, the guardians of the nest released their prisoners, and all of us, males, females and workers, streamed out of the nest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Immediately the flyers took to the air. From what Doctor De Villa had previously told me about the ants' nuptial flights, I, of course, understood the significance of this momentous event. I assumed that the weddings would take place between brothers and sisters from the same family, but I soon learned that even among ants with their strictly "closed corporations" and their jealousy in preventing strangers from entering their cities, Nature had provided a way for keeping the race strong and healthy through the advantages of interbreeding.

As soon as our sisters and brothers had hopped off, many of them flew in different directions. Those who remained flying overhead were soon joined by other flying ants who were of the same race as ours but who must have belonged to other formicaries. It wasn't long before the air was full of them. Though many of those from our nest had departed, the swarms over head were much more numerous than the entire delegation which had been hatched in our nurseries. They were like a huge swirling cloud, so densely packed that they almost blotted out the light of the sun.

I was utterly at a loss to account for this remarkable gathering of courting ants who must have come from several different nests. With no means of communication between the various ant cities; how did they all know that this day, of all days in the year, had been authoritatively set aside to be the great wedding day? This is one of the mysteries that no man has ever been able to solve. Even with the advantage I had of being on the inside, I didn't have the slightest inkling of how it was accomplished. All I know is that I, like all my fellow workers, was absolutely sure when the appointed time had arrived.

Most of the marriages took place in the air. I saw one of the married females alight on the ground near our nest. The first thing she did was to ear off her wings. She seemed to understand that she would have to spend the rest of her life underground where her wings would be of no use to her. She crawled away until she was several yards from our nest. Then she dug a hole in the ground with her mandibles, crawled inside of it and pulled the dirt around her until she was completely buried. Within her body she carried all the materials necessary for starting a community of over half a million inhabitants.

On the day after the celebration of these wholesale wedding ceremonies, our colony had a disastrous experience with a female who tried to establish herself as queen in an entirely different manner from that practised by the mother ants of our own species.

I happened to be near the opening of our nest when she first

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made her appearance among us. By her wicked, sickle-shaped mandibles I recognized her immediately. She belonged to the dreaded tribe of Amazons. As soon as she came close to the opening of our nest, five or six of the Honey Ants who were nearby rushed at her. Though they were less than one-third her size and were not nearly so well armed, they attacked her in a most heroic manner.

Knowing as I did how terrible those long pointed mandibles could be, I trembled for the safety of my comrades. Much to my surprise, however, the alien did not retaliate. Instead she stroked her tiny antagonists affectionately with her antenna and offered them food which she had regurgitated from her well filled crop. It was quite evident that she was trying to placate them. She wanted them to receive her as a friend.

The vibration of the struggle had attracted more of the Honey Ants, who swarmed out of the nest and joined in the attack. Ignoring the gestures of seeming friendliness on the part of the interloper, the defenders of the formicary seemed to understand that they had to deal with a deadly enemy who must be prevented from entering their sanctuary at any cost.

Despite their numbers and the valiant way in which they attacked her, the small, peaceful Honey Ants were no match for the monstrous Amazon. Gently but firmly she forced her way inside the nest, with dozens of the small Honey Ants clinging ineffectually to her body.

Remembering that my role was that of war correspondent and historian, I did my best to observe closely everything that subsequently happened. I realized that a momentous event was taking place and I resolved not to miss any of it. Consequently I remained as close as possible to the Amazon without doing anything to oppose her. During the succeeding happenings, I carefully kept beyond reach of her murderous mandibles, but at the same time I followed her all about, staying within smelling distance so that I could observe everything she did.

It soon became apparent that the Amazon was trying to locate our nursery. Since our brood was near the surface it didn't take her long to find a chamber in which several hundred cocoons were stored. The alien female immediately took possession of them. Once she had reached this objective, her tactics changed. Instead of continuing with her efforts to calm and placate her adversaries, she suddenly turned on them and attacked them furiously. Her method was horribly efficient. All she had to do was to seize the head of one of the smaller ants between her sharp

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pointed mandibles and her victim was completely out of the picture with its brain pierced. In this manner she attacked each of her antagonists in turn until she had slain all of them.

By this time more ants had come running from the other parts of the nest. When they sized up the situation, they realized that there wasn't much of a chance to kill the intruder, so they contented themselves with trying to carry off some of the cocoons.

This stratagem seemed to make the Amazon furious. In the universal language of the ants she rebuked the rightful owners of the brood.

"You dirty thieves!" she denounced us. "These children belong to me! How dare you steal them away from me?"

It was quite apparent that she thought she was absolutely within her rights. Instead of realizing that she herself was a murderer and a child stealer, she actually looked on the rest of us as criminals, who were trying to deprive her of property that lawfully belonged to her.

After the Amazon had killed several more of the Honey Ants because they had the temerity to come near the brood, those of use who were left decided that there was nothing to do but surrender that particular group of children to her. If she had been contented with that, it wouldn't have been so bad, but we soon found that she had even more nefarious designs against our colony.

It wasn't long before my sister workers; brave as they all were, became so afraid of the horrible, sickle-shaped weapons of the Amazon that they no longer attempted to restrain her movements but gave her a wide berth whenever she came near. The interloper became more and more arrogant. No longer did she remain in the nursery where she first revealed her villainy. She soon had the undisputed run of the whole formicary. As she strutted through the passageways in search of more children to steal, she attacked and killed every Honey Ant who came in her way.

On one of these trips of exploration, she located the holy-of-holies, the royal chamber where the Queen of the Honey Ants lived.

Without a moment's hesitation, she crawled over the large body of our Mother and perched on her back! Here she suddenly became gentle and friendly again. At least she pretended to be friendly, stroking our Queen with her antenna and licking her body affectionately.

This seemed to produce an immediate change in the attitude of the Honey Ants. If this newcomer was a friend of their beloved Mother, she must be all right. No longer did they shun her or try to harass her. Instead, some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of them actually crawled up on her body and began to cleanse and caress her. Others approached her fearlessly from the front and offered her choice droplets of honey dew which they regurgitated for her benefit. She accepted all these attentions and gifts as if she regarded them as her rightful due.

I don't think any of my sisters had the slightest idea of how far the treachery of the alien queen would go. Because I knew from experience how unreliable the Amazon People were, I didn't share in the trust which my comrades now seemed to place in her. That my suspicions were well-founded soon became apparent.

While she was perched on the back of our Mother, seemingly caressing her in a very affectionate manner, she was really engaged in a stealth and treacherous act. Slowly and cautiously, she was sawing away at the neck of our legitimate Queen. On the day after her arrival in our city she had completed her unspeakable task. Our Mother lay dead, with her head completely severed from her body.

Even then, my sister ants didn't seem to have a clear understanding of what had happened. It was a calamity, to be sure. Their dear Mother and Queen was dead, but fortunately there was another fertile Queen to replace her.

"The Queen is dead! Long live the Queen!"

How often has this same drama been enacted among human beings! Now it had taken place in the kingdom of the Honey Ants!

From the account I have just given, it may sound as if the acts of that Amazon Queen represented the lowest degree of baseness, treachery, crime and inhumanity. Through a series of wholesale murders, culminating in the assassination of the legal ruler, she had succeeded in usurping the throne and placing herself at the head of a great people.

"Monstrous!" is the natural human reaction to such a story. "Only a despicable insect could act like that!"

But wait! Just take a glance over the pages of history. And you don't need to confine your search to the stories of savage and barbarous people. Even among those who considered themselves to be highly cultured and civilized—even among those who were supposed to be devoutly religious—we can find numerous examples which would make the crimes of the Amazon Queen look tame in comparison.

Her sins at least were committed against strangers and aliens; but the worst crimes of human beings have been perpetrated against their own kin. To gain and retain their thrones, human monarchs have murdered their brothers and sisters, their mothers and fathers—and even their own children. Thus it became clear to me, that even in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their most despicable acts of violence the ants resemble human beings but with this important difference: men have perpetrated felonies that were much worse than an insect ever thought of.

It was not until I had deliberated the matter for some time that I realized the full significance of this coup on the part of the Amazon Queen.

Now that she was in full possession of the throne—now that she was being pampered, caressed and fed just like a legitimate queen, she was sitting pretty for the rest of her life.

Soon she would start the most important work of all—that of laying eggs and producing an army of young Amazons. In the meantime all her needs would be taken care of by the faithful Honey Ants whom she had tricked into serving her.

When her own brood hatched out, they would be incapable of looking after themselves. It would be necessary for the Honey Ants to feed and nurse them. Without their new Mother to keep renewing their depleted numbers, that particular colony of Honey Ants would soon be wiped out. Since the Amazons were only good for fighting, their only hope was to raid other nests, stealing the young and thus obtaining new supplies of slaves to wait on them. Then would follow the sort of life I had experienced among the Slave Makers. There would be carousing and dissipation made possible by the golden haired Bootleggers and interrupted only when they engaged in games or marauding expeditions against other ants.

CHAPTER XIII
Imprisoned!

Though the death of our Queen Mother was a sad blow to us, we all took our loss philosophically. We carried her body out of the nest and buried it with due reverence. Then we went back to our pastoral life of herding, "milking" and looking after the Aphid Cattle. I realized that the time had now come for me to forsake my newly made friends and return to my human body. But before giving the prearranged signal to Doctor De. Villa, I did a very foolish thing. Hitherto I had not participated to any great extent in the "milking" work. My activities had been confined principally to watching the others and helping them defend our flocks against enemies. An ant, I learned, doesn't need to eat very much to keep alive. Nearly all the food I had consumed was given to me by my sisters, who were always glad to regurgitate a droplet for me whenever I asked for it.

I didn't want to leave the Honey Ants without finding out more about this "milking" process. What I learned is this: Wild plant lice are in the habit of shooting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their excretions at some distance from their bodies. Usually it fell on the leaves of the plants, where it soon dried, forming the scales of manna which Doctor De Villa had described to me. But after they were adopted by the ants, these Aphids changed their habits completely. Instead of expelling the honey dew forcefully, they seemed to hold it back, storing it in their bodies until the ant dairymaids came to collect it.

When I emulated my sister ants and stroked one of the Aphids with my antenna, I noticed that a tiny drop appeared at the end of the "cow's" body. She must have squeezed it out very gently for my special benefit. All I had to do was to lick it off with my tongue and deposit it in my crop. So interested did I become in this occupation that I didn't notice how much of the sweet tasting fluid I was putting into my collective pouch. It wasn't until the fading light told me that night was approaching that I thought of quitting my work and returning home.

Much to my distress, I discovered that my gaster had become so large and so heavy that I could hardly crawl. Without realizing what I was doing I had kept pouring honey dew into my crop until it had swelled out to several times its normal size. When I finally dragged my weary body to the opening of the formicary, the gate keepers greeted me with intense excitement. Instead of permitting me to pass after the usual exchange of caresses, they took hold of me and started leading me along the main passageway of the nest. Further and further they descended, pushing and dragging me along with them, until we had reached one of the deepest portions of the nest. Here they conducted me into a vaulted ed chamber which I recognized immediately as the room of the living honey jars. Hanging to the ceiling like clusters of round berries were the distended bodies of the repletes who provided the receptacles for storing the colony's reserve food supply.

Then, for the first time, the significance of my surprising reception came over me. Because of my thoughtless diligence in collecting a superabundance of honey dew, I had stretched my abdomen until I was almost as large as one of the repletes. Noticing this, the guardians of the nest had forthwith elected me to spend the rest of my life hanging to the ceiling of this underground chamber!

At first I became panicky. I struggled and tried to get away. It was no use, however. My captors were too numerous and too strong for me. After restraining me gently for a while, they began to get rough. One of them even gave me a painful nip with her pincers. I then decided that the wisest plan was to submit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the time being, depending on my resourcefulness to find some way to escape later.

It occurred to me that everything had happened for the best after all. How could I understand the ant nature until I had shared in all their experiences? The life of a repleté was as typical of the ant people as any other vocation. I resolved, therefore, to spend at least a day among these living flagons to see what their existence was like.

Without knowing it, I was like a white man who, attracted by the carefree life of a South Sea Islander, tasted the lotus of forgetfulness and "went native."

To the educated human being there would be something revolting—almost terrifying—about the thought of being forced to pass one's entire existence clinging to the roof of an underground cavern. But, singular as it may appear, I found the life of a replete anything but disagreeable. On the contrary, it was so enjoyable that I wanted to do nothing else but remain there. None of my companions seemed at all dissatisfied. From the interchanges of thoughts which I had with the others as we hung there side by side, I gathered that they all felt as if they were very highly honored. In some ways we were even better off than the Queen. Like her we were protected against harm by being kept in a carefully guarded portion of the city. We were also constantly being brushed and licked and stroked and petted and kissed by our solicitous sisters who looked after us with the most tender care.

But most wonderful of all, we repeatedly experienced the ecstacies of regurgitation. Since our work was confined entirely to receiving food from those who had plenty and subsequently giving it up, drop after drop, to those who were hungry, we enjoyed the pleasures of regurgitation and all the petting and kissing that went with it ever so much more often than any of our less favored sisters did.

After a few hours of this delectable occupation, my ant nature nearly got the better of me. I had tasted the lotus. I had gone native. I had almost lost my human heritage.

It is hard for me to describe the terrific mental struggle I went through before that tiny speck of human consciousness within my insect head gained control over the submissive, dutiful instincts that were deeply rooted in my antbody. At last, however, my manwill conquered, and I began to plan my escape.

The task which now confronted me was the hardest one I have ever encountered. Sneaking out in my present condition was absolutely out of the question. I tried it once, but I had hardly dropped to the floor of the cavern before three of the workers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came running to me. With the utmost tenderness, they brushed me and licked my body and stroked my head. Then they proceeded to crawl up the wall, dragging me with them until they had put me back in my original position.

Then I realized that my only hope was to disgorge the contents of my crop so that my body would return to its natural size. It was absolutely imperative for me to reduce and to regain my former sylphlike figure. I tackled this job with the desperate earnestness of a Hollywood star who has been told that she must lose ten pounds or have her contract canceled. For me to reduce myself back to normalcy was by no means as easy as it may sound. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get rid of more than one tiny droplet at a time and there were many drops in my social stomach. I soon learned to distinguish between what I called the "put ants" and the "take ants." Since I was still able to move about to a certain extent while the other repletes remained motionless, it was possible for me to gain the attention of the ants who were looking for food and to get away from some of those who were trying to fill me up with more honey dew.

The most difficult part of this game was to foil the "put ants." Because I was the smallest replete in the suspended bunch they invariably made for me first. I used all sorts of schemes to avoid them. First I clung to one of the other honey jars, hoping to camouflage myself as a part of her huge body. Sometimes this worked and sometimes it didn't. When the forager detected my trick and insisted on forcing more honey dew into my body, I tried to crawl away. Invariably she followed me, urging me with stubborn persistence to accept the food she was offering me. Then I would pretend to be so dumb that I didn't understand what she wanted me for. This seemed to be the most effective plan of all. Most of the workers gave me up in disgust and unloaded their burdens of food into more willing receptacles.

By spending two or three days in dodging "put ants" and serving "take ants," I managed to reduce my shape to about one-half its exaggerated size. Picking a time when the lowered temperature of our home indicated that most of my nestmates would be enjoying their nocturnal rest, I dropped to the floor of the chamber. I quickly disgorged drop after drop of the honey dew still remaining in my crop, getting rid of it by rubbing my spongy tongue against the walls of the chamber. Luckily, the two guards who were always on duty outside the cave of the repletes were dozing, and I got past them without any difficulty.

Breaking into a brisk trot, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hurried onward and upward. I passed several ants on the way, but they seemed too sleepy to pay any attention to me. But as I came out into the main highway I got the scare of my life. Whom should I run into but Miss Sherlocka Holmes.

She recognized me immediately, of course, and accosted me. Then followed an animated conversation carried on in the ant language of gestures and taps. Here is a free translation:

"Hello there!" Sherlocka greeted me. "What in the world are you doing out here. You are a honey jar now. Don't you know that it is absolutely against the law for a honey jar to leave the storage chamber?"

"S-s-s-h-h-h!" I responded in the most mysterious manner I could assume. "There's been dirty work going on at the crossroads. I found out that some outsiders have been stealing honey dew from our repletes. Can you imagine the nerve of the scalawags! In order to catch them, I disguised myself as a honey jar and spied on them. That's why you thought I was one of the repletes. And I found out plenty, believe me!"

I had Sherlocka's undivided interest after that. She forgot all about her duty which bade her force me back to the storage chamber.

"Gosh! That must have been thrilling!" she gesticulated. "Did you catch all of the robbers?"

"I haven't caught them yet, but I'm on their trail! Believe me, I'm on their trail!"

"Let me help you!" was her eager rejoinder.

"Sorry, Sister, but I'm afraid that won't do. You see, this is a one-ant job. My only chance of running these babies down is to go it strictly on my own. But I must be on my way or I may lose track of them. Toodle-oo, my dear!" And I scampered off, leaving her standing there with her mouth wide open.

I realized that the most perilous part of my attempted jailbreak would be at the portal of the nest. Here I knew there were always several guards on duty who never relaxed their vigilance. The first idea that popped into my head was to make a wild dash for the exit, depending on the advantage of surprise to carry me through. On reflection, however, I concluded that such an attempt to crash the gate from the inside would be too risky. In case the opening happened to be blocked by the bodies of the gatekeepers, as was usually the case, I would only betray myself if I dashed madly among them.

The plan which I finally adopted was to hide in one of the nurseries close to the main entrance until dawn. I waited until the first of the ants began to file out of the nest on their way to the Aphid pastures. As unobtrusively as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possible, I joined in the procession.

My clever attempt to deceive the guards didn't work, however. They were extremely efficient, those vigilant gatekeepers of ours. It was their duty not only to keep aliens out of the nest, but also to prevent the escape of all those who were supposed to stay inside. I have known several doormen of exclusive clubs, who had memories for names, faces and occupations that were almost inconceivable, but none of them could compare with the doorwomen of our Ant Organization.

Though there were many thousands of members in our ant club, the gate keepers seemed to know intimately the identity and occupation of every individual. They recognized me instantly, in spite of my drastic campaign of reducing. At the same time, the transformation in my appearance seemed to puzzle them. They gathered around me, examining me with their antenna and conversed with each other excitedly.

"It's now or never!" thought I.

Like a football player I ploughed through the line of guards, straight-arming them with my forelegs and scattering them to the right and left. Luck was with me. I was out in the open before the astonished ants could recover themselves. Instinctively I ran with the wind and dodged under the first stone I could find. By the time the doorkeepers had reached the opening they could neither see nor smell me.

With my body quivering from my strenuous exertions, I lay motionless under the stone until I had recovered my strength. Then I crawled out and reconnoitered. I soon found a spot of bare earth fairly close to the nest but as some distance away from the path which the cowpunchers followed on the way to their herds.

Here I waited for what seemed like centuries. It couldn't have been more than a few hours, however, for the shadows of the grass blades had shortened only slightly when I felt the welcome clasp of Doctor De Villa's tweezers pressing against my sides. According to the prearranged signal, he lifted me up and then placed me on the ground again. Needless to say, I remained perfectly motionless. The next thing I knew I was on my way back to the laboratory.

CHAPTER XIV
Back to the World of Men

The newspapers of Southern California had printed an enormous amount of publicity concerning my disappearance. Naturally, my reappearance created a huge sensation. For several days I was beseiged by reporters, sob sisters and feature writers. But,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since Doctor De Villa had asked me not to divulge any of his secrets, I could not give the newspapers a particle of information.

They used every means they could think of, including the third degree, to wring a statement out of me, but I kept my own counsel. One of the most persistent of the newspaper chaps appealed to me in this wise:

"It's your duty to tell us what happened. Our public—the thousands of American citizens who read our paper—demand an explanation of your conduct, and they are entitled to one."

"Very well, then," I pretended to agree. "Tell our public that I was kidnaped by a man named Steve, who was assisted by a woman named Rose. During the last three weeks they kept me imprisoned in a shack just across the border in Mexico. Finally I made my escape, found my way back to San Diego, and here I am."

I said this so solemnly and so seriously that for a moment I had the reporter guessing.

He looked at me out of the corner of his eye and said, "Say, listen, young fellow, are you trying to kid me?"

"Certainly not, sir. I know better than to try to kid a smart newspaper man like you."

"Oh, yeah?" he retorted. "Well, if you've got to lie about it, why don't you think up a lie that's original?"

Until I completed this manuscript there was only one person to whom I related my true story. That person was Alice Hill. When she found out I was still alive, she really seemed glad.

"There's been a tremendous change in you, Kenneth," she told me. "And if you don't mind my saying so, the change had been very much for the better. I'm so glad that you have relinquished all those terrible ideas about Atheism and things like that."

"And are you sure you like me a little bit now?"

"Of course I do. I always did like you, even when you talked in such a horrid way. But you're nicer now—lots nicer, and I'm glad."

"If that's the case, will you start wearing my frat pin again?"

"That's O.K. with me, Kenneth dear."

After I had placed my signature on the dotted line of her sweet lips, Alice asked me a very significant question:

"What was the most important lesson you learned from your life among the ants?"

"It was the lesson of Religion, darling," I answere her.

"Religion?" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me that ants have a religion?"

"They certainly have—and it's a very good religion, too. If mankind can ever be persuaded to unite and to adopt a universal religion, they couldn't find a bet-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter one than what I call Myrmacism or Ant Religion. Its creed is one that ought to be accepted readily by people of every faith—Mohammedans or Buddhists, Jews or Christians, Protestants or Catholics. The keynote of this religion is simplicity itself. It is summed up in a single phrase, which may be used as a norm for guiding the conduct of any person under any circumstances."

"And what is that wonderful phrase?" asked Alice, her face beaming with eager expectation.

To which I replied: "Do whatsoever will bring the greatest amount of happiness to the largest number of people!"

The End

Did you miss the following great Stories from Fantastic?

3 for only $1.25

He That Hath Wings by Edmond Hamilton 705
Mord's Comb by Fritz Leiber 524
The Dragon by Jack Vance 704
Planet of Change by J. T. McIntosh 524
The Reaching In Ones Hands by Henry Slesar 1164
The Unbelievers Men by Philip K. Dick 1204
The Graveyard Heart by Roger Zelazny 364
Napoleon of Cyclops by John Brunner 165
Beauty Act by Philip K. Dick 264
Constipation of Space by Daniel F. Galouye 464
The Afterlives by Jack Sharkey 1163
Lady of Thought by Albert Teichner 624
A Fortnight of Miracles by Randall Garrett 365
The Destroyer by Thomas N. Scortia 645
Gulliver's Magic Islands by Miss Brackett 524
The Mirror of Cagliostro by Robert Arthur 243
The Pillars of Chambalor by John Jakes 365
STARDOCK by Fritz Leiber 965
TOMORROW AND TOMORROW by Ray Bradbury 1165

FANTASTIC STORIES
Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N. Y. 11364
Please send me the 3 stories indicated ..... (list by number)
I enclose $1.25, check, money order, or cash.
NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE .....
(please print)

Now On Sale

FRANK HERBERT'S NEW NOVEL

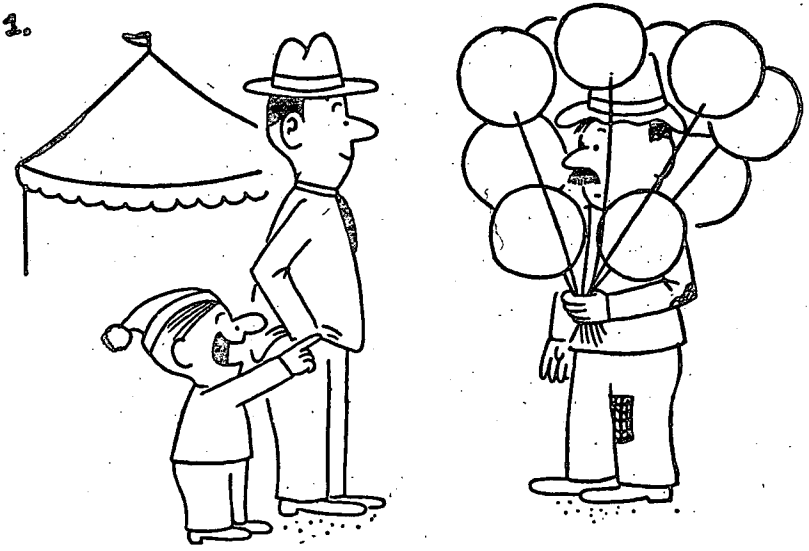
THE HEAVEN MAKERS .....

IN THE June, 1967 AMAZING

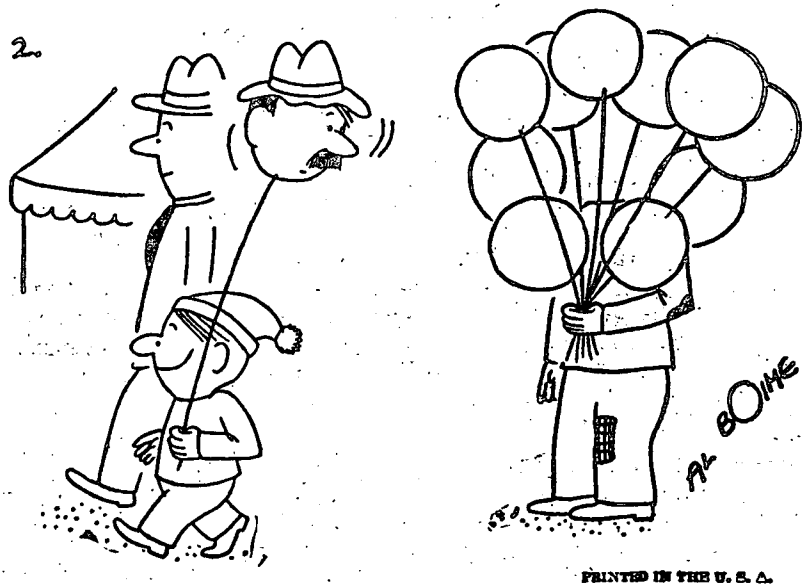
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LITTLE FORRIE . . .

1.



2.



PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. STEINWAY

By ROBERT BLOCH

From the macabre pen of Robert Bloch—author of Psycho *and "The Pin"—a bizarre variation of an old theme: the Eternal Triangle. In this case a brilliant concert pianist, an infatuated TV starlet, and a rival with four ebony legs and eighty-eight gnashing teeth!*

THE first time I saw Leo, I thought he was dead. His hair was so black and his skin was so white — I'd never seen hands so pale and thin. They lay crossed on his chest and, I suppose, concealed the rhythm of his breathing. There was something almost repulsive about him; he was so thin, so still, and there was such a *nothingness* on his face. It was like a death-mask that had been made a little too late, after the last bit of the living personality has fled. I stared down at Leo, shuddered a little, and started to move away.

Then he opened his eyes, and I fell in love with him.

He sat up, swung his legs over the side of the enormous sofa, grinned, rose. At least, I suppose he did. All I really noticed was the deep brown of his pupils and the warm, rich hunger that poured from them into me, the hunger that poured and found a feeding-place somewhere in my heart.

I know what it sounds like. But I'm not a schoolgirl, and I don't keep a dairy any longer, and it's been years since I've had a mad, mad crush. I'd been going around for years, assured that I was emotionally mature. Until he opened his eyes and I fell in love with him.

Harry was making the introductions, now.

". . . Dorothy Endicott. She heard you play in Detroit last week and she wanted to meet you. Dorothy, this is Leo Winston."

He was quite tall, and he managed a little bow, or rather an inclination of his head, without once moving his gaze. I don't know *what* he said. "Charmed" or "delighted" or "pleased to meet you" — it didn't matter. He was *looking* at me.

I did all the wrong things. I

Copyright 1954 by Ziff-Davis Pub. Co.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blushed. I giggled. I said something about how much I admired his playing, and then I repeated myself and tripped over the words.

But I did *one* right thing. I looked back. All the while Harry was explaining how we'd just happened to stop up and we didn't mean to disturb him but the door was open so we walked right in. And he wanted to remind Leo about placing the piano for tomorrow night's concert, and the ticket-sales were going good according to the latest report this noon. And now he had to run along and arrange for the puffs for tomorrow's papers, so —

"There's no reason for you to hurry off, is there, Miss Endicott?"

There was, I agreed, no reason at all. So Harry left, like the good little Samaritan he was, and I stayed and talked to Leo Winston.

I don't know what we talked about. It's only in stories that people seem able to remember long conversations *verbatim*. (Or is it long *verbatim* conversations? It's only in stories that people have perfect control of grammar, too.)

But I learned that his name was once Leo Weinstein . . . that he was thirty-one years old . . . unmarried . . . he liked Siamese kittens . . . he broke his leg once, skiing up at Saranac . . . couldn't stand Chopin or Poulenc . . . he liked Manhattans made with dry vermouth, too.

It was over the second of these, after I told him all about myself (and nothing, unless he could read my eyes) that he asked me if I wanted to meet Mr. Steinway.

Of course I said yes, and we went into the other room, the one behind the sliding doors. There sat Mr. Steinway, all black and polished to perfection grinning a welcome with his eighty-eight teeth.

"Would you like to hear Mr. Steinway play something for you?" asked Leo.

I nodded, feeling a warmth far beyond the power of two Manhattans to inspire — a warmth born of the way he said it. I hadn't felt that way since I was thirteen and in love with Bill Prentice and he asked if I'd like to see him do a Full Gaynor off the high board.

So Leo sat down on the bench and he patted Mr. Steinway on the leg the way I sometimes pat Angkor, my Siamese kitten. And they played for me. They played the *Appasionata* and the *berceuse* from *The Firebird* and something very odd by Prokofieff and then several things by the two Scotts — Cyril, and Raymond. I suppose Leo wanted to show his versatility, or perhaps that was Mr. Steinway's idea. Anyway, I liked it all, and I said so, em-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

phatically.

"I'm glad you appreciate Mr. Steinway," Leo said. "He's very sensitive, I'll have you know, like everyone in my family. And he's been with me a long time — almost eleven years. He was a surprise from my mother, when I made my debut at Carnegie."

Leo stood up. He was very close to me, because I'd been sitting on the piano bench beside him ever since the *berceuse*, and that made it easier for me to see his eyes as he closed the black lip over Mr. Steinway's teeth and said, "Time for a little rest, before they come and get you."

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Is Mr. Steinway ill?"

"Not at all — I thought he sounded in the best of spirits." Leo grinned (how could I ever have imagined him dead, with his incandescent vitality?) and faced me. "He's going over to the concert hall this evening — he has a date to play with me tomorrow night. Which reminds me, will you be there?"

The only answer for that one was, "Silly boy!" but I restrained it. Restraint did not come easy with me when I was with Leo. Not when he looked at me like that. With his eyes holding such hunger, and the long slim fingers caressing the panelling as they had caressed the keys, as they could so easily caress —

I trust I'm making myself clear?

Certainly I was transparent enough the following evening. After the concert we went out, just the four of us; Harry and his wife, Leo, and I. And then just Leo and I, in the candlelight of the apartment, in the big room that looked so bare and empty without Mr. Steinway squatting there where he belonged. We watched the stars over Central Park and then we watched the reflections in each other's pupils, and what we said and what we did are not meant for sharing.

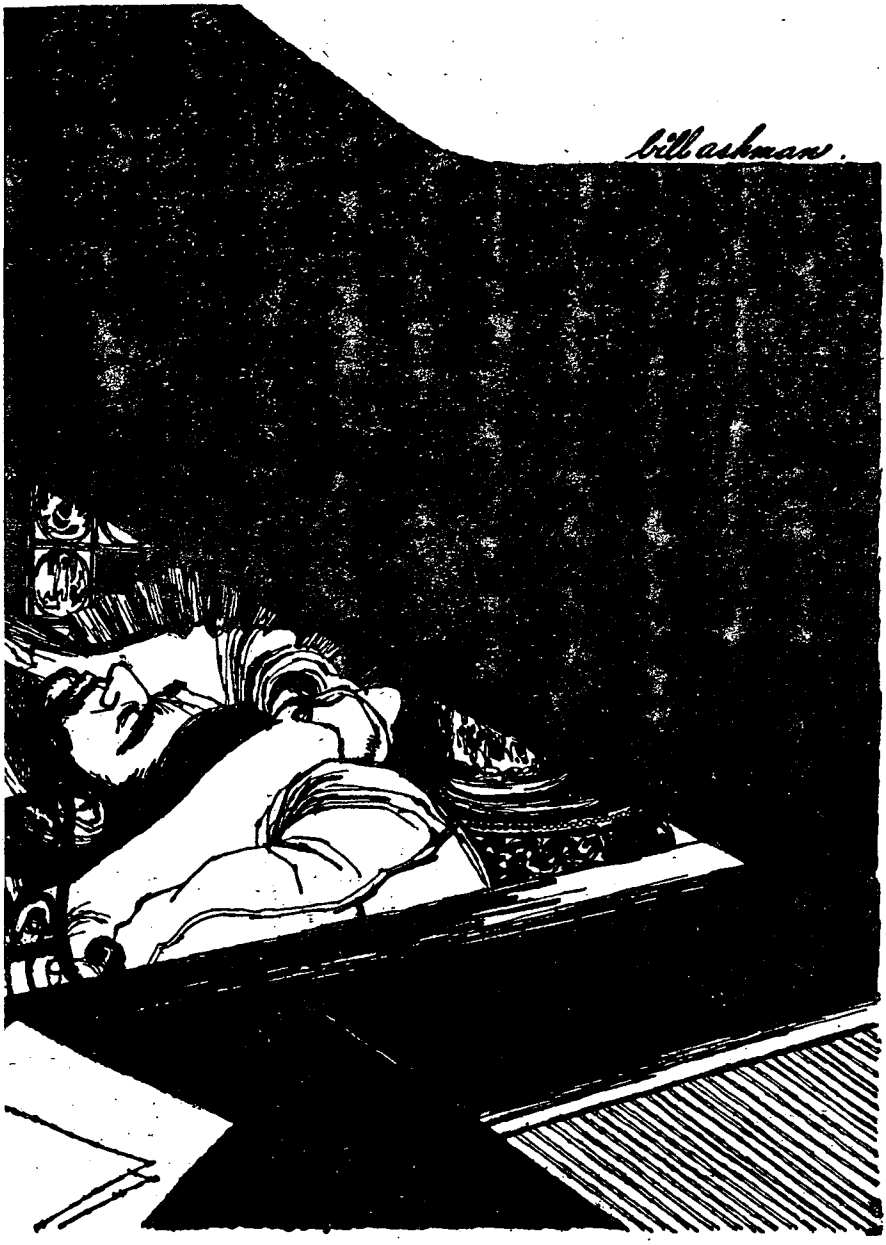
The next day, after we read the notices, we went for a walk in the Park. Leo had to wait until they'd moved Mr. Steinway back into the apartment, and it was lovely in the Park, as always. As it must have been for millions who, somewhere in their memories, hold an instant when they walked in Central Park in May and owned it all — the trees, the sunshine, the distant laughter rising and falling as transiently as the heartbeat quickened by a moment of ecstasy.

But — "I think they're on the way over," Leo said, glancing at his watch and rising from the bench. "I really ought to be there when they move him in. Mr. Steinway's big, but he's quite delicate, actually."

I took his hand. "Come on, then," I said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He frowned. I'd never seen him frown before, and it seemed out of character to me. "Maybe you'd better not, Dorothy. I mean, it's a slow job up those stairs, and then I'll have to practise. Don't forget, I'm booked for Boston next Friday, and that means four hours a day for the next week — Mr. Steinway and I must get our program in shape. We're doing the Ravel Concerto, the Left-Hand one, with the Symphony, and Mr. Steinway isn't fond of Ravel. Besides, he'll be leaving on Wednesday morning, so there really isn't too much time."

"But you aren't taking the piano with you on tour, are you?"

"Certainly. Where I go, Mr. Steinway goes. I've never used nother instrument since Mother gave him to me. I wouldn't feel right about it, and I'm sure it would break Mr. Steinway's heart."

Mr. Steinway's heart.

I had a rival, it seems. And I laughed about it, we both laughed about it, and he went away to his work and I went back to my apartment to sleep, perchance to dream . . . .

I tried phoning him about five. No answer. I waited a half-hour, and then I grabbed the nearest rosy pink cloud and floated over to his apartment.

As usual — as was customary with Leo, whose mother had literally kept "open house" out on the Cape — the door was unlocked. And I naturally took advantage of the situation to tiptoe in and surprise Leo. I pictured him playing, practising, absorbed in his work. But Mr. Steinway was silent, and the sliding doors to the other room were closed. I got my surprise in the anteroom.

Leo was dead again.

He lay there on the huge couch, his pallor almost phosphorescent in the gathering twilight. And his eyes were closed and his ears were closed and his very heart seemed closed until I bent down and blended the warmth of my lips with his own.

"Dorothy!"

"Sleeping Beauty, in reverse!" I exclaimed, triumphantly, rumpling his hair. "What's the matter, darling? Tired after your rehearsal? I don't blame you, considering —"

It was still light enough for me to recognize his frown.

"Did I — startle you?" It was a B-movie line, but this was, to me, a B-movie situation. The brilliant young concert pianist, torn between love and a career, interrupted in his pursuit of art by the sweet young thing. He frowns, rises, takes her by the shoulders as the camera pans in close and says —

"Dorothy, there's something you and I must talk about."

I was right. Here it comes, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

told myself. The lecture about how art comes first, love and work don't mix — and after last night, too! I suppose I pouted. I make a very pretty pout, on occasion. But I waited, prepared to hear him out.

And he said, "Dorothy, what do you know about Solar Science?"

"I've ever heard of it."

"That's not surprising. It's not a popular system; nothing in parapsychology has gained general acceptance. But it works, you know. It works. Perhaps I'd better explain from the beginning, so you'll understand."

So he explained from the beginning, and I did my best to understand. He must have talked for over an hour, but what I got out of it boils down to just a little.

It was his mother, really, who got interested in Solar Science. Apparently the basis of the concept was similar to Yoga or some of these new mental health systems. She'd been experimenting for about a year before her death — and during the past four years, since her passing, Leo had worked on it alone. The trance was part of the system. Briefly, as near as I could make out, it consisted of concentration — "but effortless effort of concentration, that's important" — on one's inner self, in order to establish "complete self-awareness." According to Solar Science one can become perfectly and utterly aware of one's entire being, and "communicate" with the organs of the body, the cells, the very atomic and molecular structure. Because everything, down to the very molecules, possesses a vibration-frequency and is therefore alive. And the personality, as an integrated unit, achieves full harmony only when complete communication is established.

Leo practised four hours a day with Mr. Steinway. And he devoted at least two hours a day to Solar Science and "self-awareness." It had done wonders for him, done wonders for his playing. For relaxation, for renewal, for serenity, it was the ultimate answer. And it led to an *extension* of awareness. But he'd talk about that some other time. What did I think?

What *did* I think?

I honestly didn't know. Like everyone else, I'd heard a lot, and listened to very little, about telepathy and extra-sensory perception and teleportation and such things. And I'd always associated these matters with the comic-strip idea of scientists and psychologists and outright charlatans and gullible old women given to wearing long ropes of wooden beads which they twisted nervously during seances.

It was something different to hear Leo talk about it, to feel the intensity of his conviction, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hear him say — with a belief that burned — that this meditation was all that had preserved his sanity in the years after his mother died.

So I told him I understood, and I'd never interfere with his scheme of living, and all I wanted was to be with him and be *for* him whenever and wherever there was a place for me in his life. And, at the time, I believed it.

I believed it even though I could only see him for an hour or so, each evening, before his Boston concert. I got a few TV leads during the week — Harry arranged some auditions, but the client postponed his decision until the first of the month — and that helped to pass the time.

Then I flew up to Boston for the concert, and Leo was magnificent, and we came back together with nary a thought or a word about Solar Science or anything except the two of us.

But on Sunday morning, we were three again. Mr. Steinway arrived.

I dashed over to my own apartment and came running back after lunch. Central Park shimmered in the sunlight, and I admit I shared something of its radiance.

Until I was in the apartment, and heard Mr. Steinway rumbling and growling and purring and screeching and cachinnating, and I hurried in to Leo and the piano stopped.

He frowned. It seemed I was developing quite a talent for making an unexpected entrance.

"I didn't expect you so soon," he said. "I was just practising something new."

"So I heard. What's the rest of it?"

"Never mind, now. Did you want to go out this afternoon?" He said it just as if he didn't see the new shoes, the suit, the hat I'd bought from Mr. John just to surprise him.

"No. Honestly, darling, I didn't mean to interrupt. Go on with your playing."

Leo shook his head. He stared down at Mr. Steinway.

"Does it bother you to have me around when you practise?"

Leo didn't look up.

"I'll go away."

"Please," he said. "It isn't me. But I'm afraid that Mr. Steinway doesn't — respond to you properly."

That tore it. *That* ripped it to shreds. "Now wait a minute," I said, coolly (if white-hot rage is cool). "Are we doing a scene from *Harvey*, now? Is this some more of your Solar Science, and am I to infer that Mr. Steinway is alive? I admit I'm not very bright, not overly perceptive, and I couldn't be expected to share your sensitive reactions. So I've never noticed that Mr. Steinway had an existence of his own. As a matter of fact, to me, it's just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

another piano. And its legs don't begin to compare with my own."

"Dorothy, please —"

"Dorothy doesn't please! Dorothy isn't going to say one more word in the presence of your — your — incubus, or whatever it is! So *Mr.* Steinway doesn't *respond* to me properly, is that it? Well, you tell *Mr.* Steinway for me that he can go plumb to —"

Somehow he got me out of the apartment, into the sunlight, into the park, into his arms. And it was peaceful there, and his voice was soft, and far away the birds made a song that hurt me in my throat.

". . . so you weren't far wrong at that, darling," Leo told me. "I know it's hard to believe for anyone who hasn't studied Solar Science or ultra-kinetic phenomena. But Mr. Steinway *is* alive in a way. I can communicate with him, and he can communicate with me."

"You *talk* to it? It *talks* to you?"

His laughter was reassuring, and I desperately wanted to be reassured, now. "Of course not. I'm talking about vibrationary communication. Look at it this way, darling. I don't want to sound like a lecturer — but this is science, not imagination.

"Did you ever stop to think what makes a piano? It's a highly complicated arrangement of substances and materials — thousands of tiny, carefully calculated operations go into the construction of a truly fine instrument. In a way, the result is comparable to the creation of an artificial being; a musical robot. To begin with, there's a dozen different kinds of wood, of various ages and condition. There's special finishes, and felt, gut, animal matter, varnish, metal, ivory — a combination of elements infinitely complex. And each has its own vibrationary rate, which in turn forms part of the greater vibrationary rate of the whole. These vibrations can be sensed, contacted and understood."

I listened, because I wanted to find sense and sanity and serenity somewhere in it all. I wanted to believe, because this was Leo talking.

"Now, one thing more, and that's the crux of the matter. When vibration occurs, as it does in all being, electronic structure is disturbed. There's an action sequence — and a record of that action is made on the cellular structure.

"Now if you record many messages on a single piece of tape at different speeds, you'd have to play them back at these speeds in order to understand the message as a whole. Inability to do so would keep you from knowing or comprehending these messages. That's what ordinarily bars our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communication with non-human life forms and gives us the impression that they have neither thought nor sentience.

"Since we humans use the development of the human brain as criterion, we aren't aware of the intelligence of other life-forms. We don't know how intelligent they are because we, most of us, don't realize that rocks and trees and everything in the material universe can 'think' or 'record' or 'communicate' at its own level.

"That's what Solar Science has taught me — and it has given me the method of entering into communication with such forms. Naturally, it isn't simple. But from self-awareness I have slowly proceeded into a more general awareness of vibrationary rates. It's only logical that Mr. Steinway, so much a part of my life and a part of me, would be a logical subject for an experiment in communication. I've made that experiment and succeeded, at least partially. I can share communication with Mr. Steinway; and it's not all one-way, I assure you. You remember what the Bible said about 'sermons in stones' — it's literally true."

Of course he said more than that, and less, and in different words. But I got the idea. I got the idea only too well. Leo wasn't altogether rational.

"It's really a functional entity, too, darling," he was saying. "Mr. Steinway has a personality all his own. And it's a growing one, thanks to my ability to communicate with him in turn. When I practise, Mr. Steinway practises. When I play, Mr. Steinway plays. In a sense, Mr. Steinway does the actual playing and I'm really only the mechanism that starts the operation. It may sound incredible to you, Dorothy, but I'm not fooling when I say there are things Mr. Steinway refuses to play. There are concert halls he doesn't like, certain tuning practises he refuses to respond to or adjust to. He's a temperamental artist, believe me, but he's a great one! And I respect his individuality and his talent.

"Give me a chance, darling — a chance to communicate with him until he understands you and your place in our lives. I can override his jealousy after all, isn't it natural that he'd be jealous? Let me attune our vibrations, until he senses the reality of your presence as I sense it. Please, try not to think of me as crazy. It's not hallucination. Believe me."

I stood up. "All right, Leo. I believe you. But the rest is up to you. I shan't be seeing you again until — until you've made some arrangements."

My high heels clip-clip-clipped up the path. He didn't try to follow me. A cloud covered the sun, wrapped it in a ragged cloth, torn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and dirty. Torn and dirty —

I went to Harry, of course. After all, he was Leo's agent and he'd know. But he *didn't* know. I found that out at once, and I cut myself off before I said too much. As far as Harry was concerned, Leo was perfectly normal.

"Except, of course, you may be thinking of that business with his mother. The old lady's death hit him pretty hard, you know what show business moms are like. She ran the whole shooting-match for years, and when she kicked off like that, he kind of went haywire for a while. But he's all right now. A good man, Leo. A comer. Thinking of a European flier next season — they think Solomon is such hot stuff. Wait until they hear Leo."

That's what I got out of Harry, and it wasn't much. Or *was* it?

It was enough to set me thinking, as I walked home — thinking about little Leo Weinstein, the boy prodigy, and his adoring mother. She watched over him, shielded him, saw to it that he practised and rehearsed, regulated the details of his life so he came to depend upon her utterly. And then, when he made his debut like a good boy, she gave him Mr. Steinway.

Leo had cracked up, a bit, when she died. I could imagine that very easily. He had cracked up until he turned to his mother's gift for support. Mr. Steinway had taken over. Mr. Steinway was more than a piano, but not in the way Leo said. In reality, Mr. Steinway had become a surrogate for the mother. An extension of the Oedipus-situation, wasn't that what they called it?

Everything was falling into a pattern, now. Leo, lying on the couch and looking as though he were dead — returning, in fantasy, to the womb. Leo "communicating" with the vibrations of inanimate objects — trying to maintain contact with his mother beyond the grave.

That was it, that must be it, and I knew no way of fighting the situation. Silver cord from the mother or silver chord from the piano — it formed a Gordian knot either way, and I was weaponless.

I arrived at my apartment and my decision simultaneously. Leo was out of my life. Except —

He was waiting for me in the hall.

Oh, it's easy to be logical, and reason matters out coldly, and decide on a sensible course of action. Until somebody holds you in his arms, and you have the feeling that you *belong* there and he promises you that things will be different from now on, he understands, he can't live without you. He said all the tried and true things, the trite and true things, the right and true things. And all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that had gone before faded away with the daylight, and the stars came out and spread their splendour . . .

I must be very exact now. It's important that I be exact. I want to tell just how it was the next afternoon when I walked around to his apartment.

The door was open and I came in, and it was like coming home. Until I saw that the sliding doors to the other room were closed, until I started towards them, until I heard the music. Leo — and Mr. Steinway — were playing again.

I called it "music," but it wasn't *that*, any more than the sudden anguished scream thrust from a human throat is normal communication. All I can say is that the piano was playing and the sound came to me as vibrations, and for the first time I understood something of what Leo had meant.

For I heard, and understood that I heard, the shrill trumpeting of elephants, the slow groaning of boughs in the nightwind, the crash of toppling timber, the raw rumble of ore filling a furnace, the hideous hissing of molten metal, the screech of steel, the agonized whine of sandpaper, the tormented thrum of twisted strings. The voices that were not voices spoke, the inanimate was animate, and Mr. Steinway was alive.

Until I slid the doors open, and the sound suddenly ceased, and I saw Mr. Steinway sitting there alone.

Yes, he was alone, and I saw it as surely as I saw Leo slumped in the chair on the far side of the room, with the look of death on his face.

He couldn't have stopped in time and run across the room to that chair — any more than he could have composed that atonal *allegro* Mr. Steinway played.

Then I shook Leo, and he came alive again, and I was crying in his arms and telling him what I'd heard, and hearing him say, "It's happened, you can see that now, can't you? Mr. Steinway exists — he communicates directly — he's an integrated personality. Communication is a two-way affair, after all. And he can tap my energy, take what he needs from me to function. When I let go, he takes over. Don't you see?"

I saw. And I tried to keep the fear from my eyes, tried to banish it from my voice, when I spoke to him. "Come into the other room, Leo. Now. Hurry, and don't ask questions."

I didn't want questions, because I didn't want to tell him that I was afraid to talk in Mr. Steinway's presence. Because Mr. Steinway could hear, and he was jealous.

I didn't want Mr. Steinway to hear when I told Leo, "You've

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

got to get rid of it. I don't care if it's alive or if we're both crazy. The important thing is to get rid of it, now. Get away from it. Together."

He nodded, but I didn't want nods.

"Listen to me, Leo! This is the only time I'll ask it, and your only chance to answer. Will you come away with me now, today? I mean it — pack a suitcase. Meet me at my apartment in half an hour. I'll phone Harry, tell him something, anything. We haven't time for anything more. I know we haven't time."

Leo looked at me, and his face started to go dead, and I took a deep breath, waiting for the sound to start again from the room beyond — but his eyes met mine, and then the color came back to his face and he smiled at me, *with* me, and he said, "I'll see you in twenty minutes. With suitcase."

I went down the stairs swiftly, and I know I had perfect control. I had perfect control out on the street, too, until I heard the vibrations of my own high heels. And the sound of tires on the pavement, and the singing of the telephone wires in the wind, and the *snick* of traffic-lights, and the creaking of an awning, and then came the sense of the sounds *under* the sounds and I heard the voice of the city. There's agony in asphalt and a slow melancholy in concrete, and wood is tortured when it splinters, and the vibrations of a piece of cloth twisted into clothing weaves terror from a threnody of thread. And all around me I felt the waves, the endless waves, beating in and pulsing over, pouring out their life.

Nothing looked different, and everything was changed. For the world was *alive*. For the first time, everything in the world came alive, and I sensed the struggle to survive. And the steps in my hallway were alive, and the banister was a long brown serpent, and it hurt the key to be twisted in the lock, and the bed sagged and the springs complained when I put down the suitcase and crushed my protesting clothes into its confines. And the mirror was a silver shimmer of torment, and the lipstick was being bruised by my lips, and I could never, never eat food again.

But I did what I had to do, and I glanced at my watch and tried to hear only the ticking, not the cries of coils and the moan of metal; tried to see only the time and not the hands.

Twenty minutes.

Only, now, forty minutes had passed. And I hadn't even phoned Harry yet (the black mouthpiece, the bakelite corroding, the wires nailed to the crosses of telephone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poles) and I couldn't phone because Leo wasn't here.

To go down again into the street was more than flesh could bear, but the need was stronger than the needs of flesh. And I went out into the seething symphony where all sound was vibration and all vibration was life, and I came to Leo's apartment and everything was dark.

Everything was dark except Mr. Steinway's teeth, gleaming like the tusks of elephants in forests of ebony and teak. Leo couldn't have moved Mr. Steinway from the inner room to the outer room. And he hated Chopin. He wouldn't sit there in the dark playing the *Funeral March* . . .

Mr. Steinway's teeth were spotted with little drops and they gleamed, too. And Mr. Steinway's heavy legs were wet. They brushed against me, because Mr. Steinway was rolling and rumbling towards me across the room, and he was playing and playing and telling me to look, look, look at the floor where I could see Leo dead, *really* dead, and all the power was Mr. Steinway's now, the power to play, the power to live, the power to kill . . .

Yes, it's true. I scraped the box and liberated the sulphur and released the flame and started the fire and let its roaring drown out the vibrations, drown out the voice of Mr. Steinway as he screamed and gnashed his eighty-eight teeth. I set the fire. I admit it. I killed Mr. Steinway. I admit it.

But I *didn't* kill Leo.

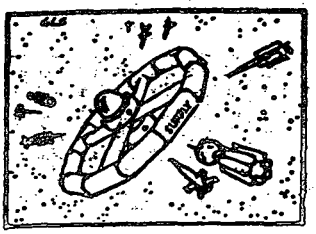
Why don't you ask *them? They're* burned, but *they* know! Ask the sofa. Ask the rug. Ask the pictures on the wall. *They* saw it happen. *They* know I'm not guilty.

You can do it. All you need is the ability to communicate with the vibrations. Just as I'm doing it now. See? I can hear everything they're saying, right in this room. I can understand the cot, and the walls, and the doors, and the bars and the ceiling.

I don't have anything more to say. If you don't believe me, if you won't help me, then go away. Let me just sit here and listen. Listen to the bars . . .

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



CLASSIFIED market place

RATES AND TERMS: 25¢ per word (including name and address). Minimum order $2.50. Payment must accompany copy except when ads are placed by accredited advertising agencies. Frequency discount: 5% for 6 months; 10% for 12 months paid in advance.

GENERAL INFORMATION: First word in all ads set in bold caps at no extra charge. Additional words may be set in bold caps at 5¢ extra per word. All copy subject to publisher's approval. Closing Date: 1st of the 3rd preceding month (for example, April issue closes January 1st). Send order and remittance to: Leonard Greene, Inc., 1457 Broadway, New York, N.Y., 10036.

AUTHORS WANTED

LOOKING FOR a Publisher? Learn how you can have your book published, promoted, distributed. Send for Free booklet "AF". Vantage Press, 120 West 31st Street, New York 1.

BOOKS

WEIRD TALES in the 1930's. A 40 page essay discussing Lovecraft, Howard, Bloch, Hamilton, Juttner, etc. 25¢. Reg Smith, 1509 Ma:-Les, Santa Ana, Calif. 92706

SPECIALISTS: Science-Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction, Books, Factbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, 63 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y.

ATTIC Treasure! "Ruthbella, Beloved!" $2.00; "Giansincere's Loves"—$2.00' "Love Lyrics, Songs"—$1.00. Bookways, 444-AF, Fort Lee, N.J. 07024.

SF Bargains. List free. Werewolf Bookshop, Verona 47, Pa.

FANTASY Book Sale, List 10¢, Gary Duncan, Pylesville, Md. 21132

"THE HORSE RACES SCIENTIFICALLY," copyright booklet by world famous Numerologist, Welden divulges racing's "Secret of The Ages." Price $10.00. Welden Publishing Company, Box 2489, Sacramento, California 95811. Unbelievable profits for You!

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

NAME the book—we'll find it for you! Out of print book specialists. All subjects. (Title alone is sufficient.) Write—no obligation. Books-On-File, Dept. AMF, Union City, New Jersey.

PROBE Magazine brings you the latest factual reports about FLYING SAUCERS. Sample copy 35¢. Probe, 132 Fifth Avenue, Woonsocket, Rhode Island 02895.

BACK issues Science Fiction magazines, books. Pocket editions, 5 for $1.15. Free lists. John E. Koestner, 2124 Rene Court, Brooklyn, 37, N.Y. 11237

MAGAZINES

SCIENTEANTASY specialist: magazines, books. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 75 Wyckoff, Wyckoff, N. J. 07481.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

How to Make Money Writing Short Paragraphs. Information Free, Barrett, Dept. C-383-O, 6216 N. Clark, Chicago, 60626

FREE Book "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses." Fascinating! Work home! Plymouth-113LJ, Brooklyn, New York 11218

FOR MEN

CONFIDENTIAL Directory lists 65 dealers, unusual Adult items—$1.00. Rocco, Box 4015-U3, Miami Beach, Florida 33141.

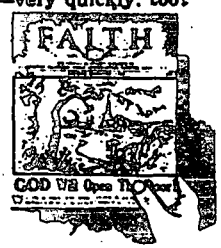
HYPNOTISM

HYPNOTISM Revealed. Free Illustrated Details: Powers, 8721 Sunset, Hollywood, California 90069.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"WITH GOD All Things Are Possible"

Are you facing difficult problems? Poor health? Money or Job Troubles? Unhappiness? Drink? Love or Family Troubles? Would you like more Happiness, Success and "Good Fortune" in Life? If you have any of these Problems, or others like them, dear friend, then here is wonderful NEWS of a remarkable NEW WAY of PRAYER that is helping thousands to glorious new happiness and joy! And it may bring a whole new world of happiness and joy to you —very quickly, too!



FREE
To All Who Need Help!

Just clip this message NOW and mail with your name, address, and 25c to cover postage and handling. We will rush this wonderful NEW MESSAGE of PRAYER and FAITH to you by Return Mail, plus a FREE copy of our magazine called FAITH which will show you exactly how to apply our wonderful NEW WAY OF PRAYER in seeking God's Guidance and Help in meeting your Problems. We will also send you FREE the beautiful golden Cross shown below, for you to keep and treasure. You will bless this day, Dear Friend, so don't delay! If you would like more Happiness, Success and "Good Fortune" in life please use coupon below to send us your name and address NOW!

Also FREE
If you Act Now
This Lovely GOLDEN CROSS for you to keep and treasure.

CLIP AND MAIL THIS COUPON NOW

LIFE-STUDY FELLOWSHIP
BOX F-3414 Noroton, Conn.

Please send me absolutely FREE, your Wonderful NEW MESSAGE of PRAYER AND FAITH, plus a FREE copy of FAITH Magazine and the FREE Golden Cross. Enclosed is 25c for postage and handling.

Mr.
Mrs. .....
Miss

Address .....

City .....

FREE HYPNOTISM, self-hypnosis. Sleep le catalog! Drawer A-F 400, Ruidoso, New ! 99345

INSTRUCTIONS

GET A BRITISH DIPLOMA; Divinity Philosop chemistry Color. Super-Science. 35 courses pectus Free. Dept./FG, Brantridge Forest S Balcombe Sussex, England.

PERSONALS

"SELF-HYPNO TAPES"—Send for our Fre chure, "What's It All About." Personalized Box 190-U, Quincy, Massachusetts 02169.

ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS each 3 and illustrated with eight page cartoons of characters and full of fun and entertair

Twenty different booklets $1.00. Treasure elty, 182-H Knickerbocker Station, New Y N.Y.

MISCELLANEOUS

PORTRAIT of a Martian. Small novelty (color) $1. Susan Denin, Route #1, Box Molalla, Oregon 97038

MUSIC

YOUR subconscious power can help make yo and successful. $2, Publications, Box 2002, S veda, California 91343

WILL write new melodies for your poem. Examination. Allegro, Box 2002, Sepulveda, ornia 91343

BILL PROBLEMS
WE CAN HELP YOU
NOBODY REFUSED UP TO $15,00
Bad Credit No Problem ■ Not a Loan
Send your name and address for FREE applicatior
NATIONAL ACCEPTANCE, dept.M-7
5133 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, Arizona

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMAZING IS NOW LARGER THAN EVER WITH AN ADDITIONAL 32 PAGES PER ISSUE! MORE PAGES—MORE STORIES

Subscribe now and read top science-fiction stories by such great names as: ISAAC ASIMOV, RAY BRADBURY, JOHN WYNDHAM, FRITZ LEIBER, ROBERT F. YOUNG, POUL ANDERSON, KEITH LAUMER, EDMOND HAMILTON, etc.

First In Science Fiction ● Since 1926

Amazing stories

Only $2.50 for one year (6 issues)
EXTRA BONUS! Did you miss any of these great stories. FREE if you subscribe now. (One for every 1 year sub.)

266 SUNJAMMER by Arthur C. Clarke
1265 ON THE SAND PLANET by Cordwainer Smith
1065 CHRYSALIS by Ray Bradbury
865 TIME BOMB by Keith Laumer
763 REDEMPTION by Robert F. Young
365 GREENSLAVES by Frank Herbert
264 BRIDGE TO AZRAEL by John Brunner
265 FAR REACH TO CYGNUS by Fritz Leiber
564 BOILING POINT by Lester del Rey
764 PLACEMENT TEST by Keith Laumer
465 THE SHORES OF INFINITY by Edmond Hamilton
165 BLUE BOY by Jack Sharkey

CLIP AND MAIL THIS MONEY-SAVING COUPON TODAY.

Enter my subscription for the **New Giant** 162 page AMAZING STORIES (Extra 32 pages)
6 Issues only $2.50 ..... 12 Issues only $4.50 .....

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Send the following free Issues ..... [List by number]

(Add 50¢ per year additional postage for Canada and Pan American countries; add $1 per year extra for all other foreign orders.)

Mail to: Amazing/ Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing, N.Y. 11364

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Look who's smiling now!"

"The department head's job had just been left vacant. When the boys in the office learned I was gunning for it, they gave me their widest grins. One thing they didn't know: I had made up my mind sometime back to take LaSalle training that would qualify me for a better job. My study paid off so fast it surprised even me—I was picked for that shiny promotion over everyone's head. Who wouldn't be smiling with a neat new $1,500 increase!"

LASALLE'S FILES are filled with letters with this kind of story from LaSalle graduates who have rapidly climbed the ladder of success. You, too, can qualify for the career opportunity of your choice through LaSalle home study—without interfering with your present work—and by devoting only a little of your spare time.

LaSalle has been an acknowledged leader in home education for more than half a century. It has enrolled more than 1,000,000 ambitious men and women in its many types of training courses. LaSalle's distinguished faculty includes some of the country's foremost practicing specialists and instructors. That's why your training is in good, experienced hands . . . why your LaSalle diploma will be respected by employers.

Mailing the LaSalle coupon below may be the first step in getting a better job, higher pay, and all of the good things that go with success. Simply check the program in which you are most interested, and we will send you a valuable free booklet describing the opportunities in that field. Mail the coupon to LaSalle, 417 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution • 417 South Dearborn, Dept. 66-055 Chicago, Illinois 60605

Please send me, without cost or obligation, FREE booklet and full information on the field I have checked below:

ACCOUNTING
- ☐ Complete Accounting with CPA Training
- ☐ General Accounting
- ☐ Income Tax
- ☐ Accounting Fundamentals
- ☐ Auditing
- ☐ Controllership
- ☐ CPA Training
- ☐ Modern Bookkeeping

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
- ☐ Complete Business Management
- ☐ Credit and Collections
- ☐ Office Management
- ☐ Personnel Management
- ☐ Business Correspondence

LAW COURSES
- ☐ Bachelor of Laws Degree
- ☐ Business Law
- ☐ Insurance Law
- ☐ Claim Adjusting Law
- ☐ Law for Police Officers
- ☐ Law for Trust Officers

SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ Sales Management
- ☐ Complete Sales Training

DRAFTING
- ☐ Basic Drafting
- ☐ Aeronautical Drafting
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Structural Drafting

REAL ESTATE
- ☐ Complete Real Estate
- ☐ Real Estate Brokerage
- ☐ Real Estate Management
- ☐ Real Estate Sales

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION
- ☐ Complete Traffic Mgt.
- ☐ Transportation Law
- ☐ Rates and Tariffs
- ☐ Agency and Services
- ☐ Motor Truck Traffic

STENOTYPE
- ☐ Machine Shorthand

TECHNICAL COURSES
- ☐ Mechanical Refrigeration
- ☐ Air Conditioning, Refrigeration and Heating
- ☐ Diesel

HIGH SCHOOL
- ☐ High School Diploma

CAREERS FOR WOMEN
- ☐ Interior Decorator
- ☐ Dental Assistant
- ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Real Estate

Name . . . . . Age . . . .

Address . . . . . County . . . . .

City & State . . . . . Zip No. . . . .

Occupation . . . . . Working Hours . . . . A.M. . . . . P.M.

331

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED